No 30 September 1985

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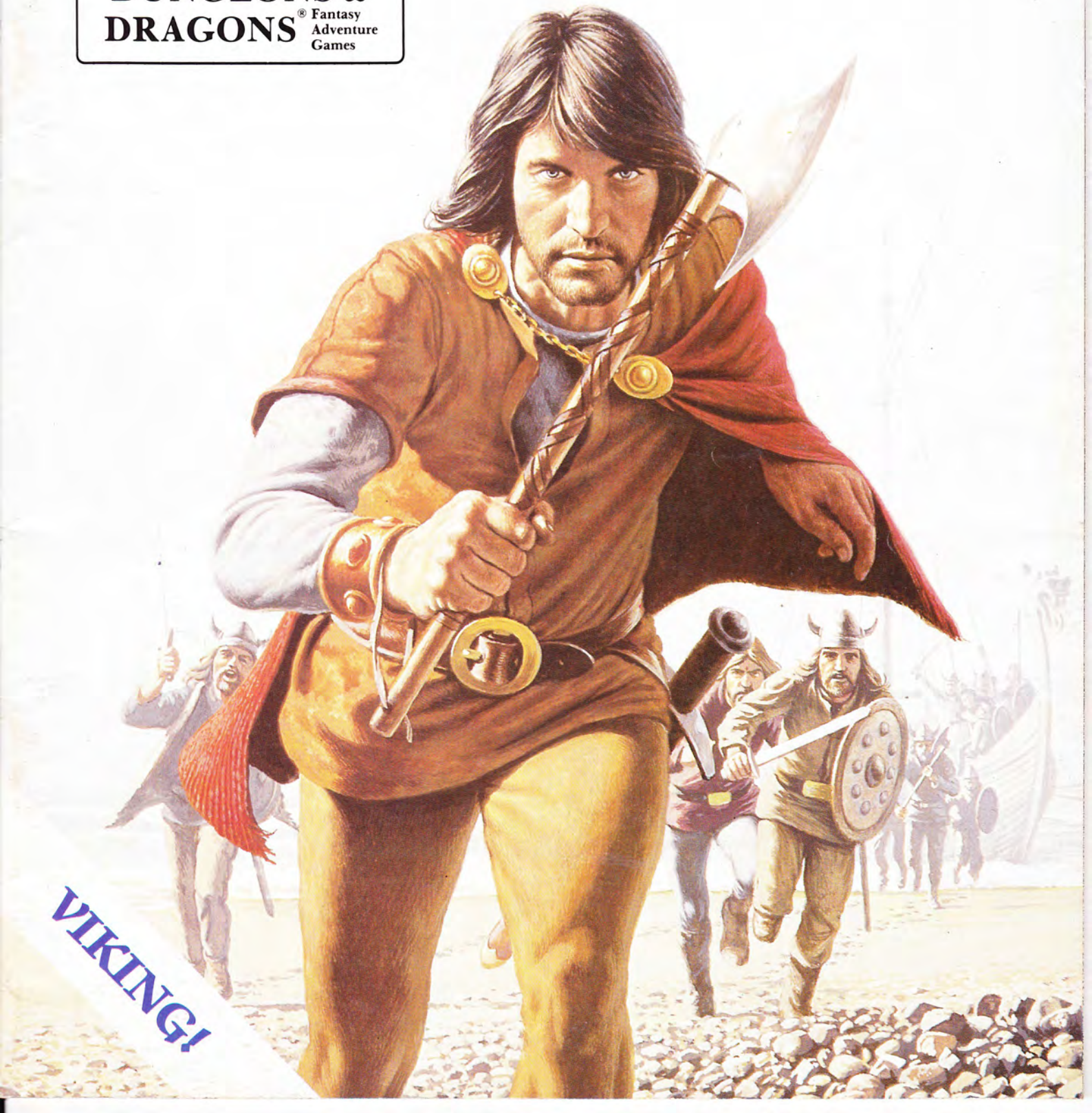

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IMAGINE™ Magazine

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..... Published by TSR UK Ltd ..... Publisher **Don Turnbull** ..... Editor **Keith Thomson** .....
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Editorial

Since this issue is dedicated to the exploits of my ancestors — give or take a few amorous exploits with the Picts, Celts, Anglo Saxons and the odd Spanish sailor or two — I felt it my duty to pen a few words to commend it to you. I did offer to write a detailed account of the exploits of Ragnar Hairy-Breeks, but the team decided that there was too much pillage and not enough of anything else. So, instead, we have Graeme Davis and Carole Morris to set the scene, Venetia Lee to cover the territory, and Rod Stevenson to uplift us. I feel at home with this issue, not least because it has a scenario featuring the end of the world, and I can't wait to see how they are going to follow that. I hope you will all find plenty to read, and plenty of new possibilities for your gaming. As I have said before "it's nae muckle yese if ye dinnae ken fit yerr daein" — so read on, and start adventuring

Keith Thorrson

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IMAGINE™ magazine is published monthly by TSR UK Ltd, The Mill, Rathmore Road, CAMBRIDGE CB1 4AD. Telephone: (0223) 212517. Telex: 818761.

IMAGINE magazine is available from all good hobby shops and newsagents. It is distributed through the newstrade by Seymour Press Ltd, 334 Brixton Road, LONDON SW9 7AG. It is also available direct from the publisher by individual subscription. The subscription rate is still only £12 for 12 issues.

Back issues of IMAGINE magazine, where still available, can be bought directly from the above address for the price of £1.00 + 50p p&p per order — in the UK only. Payment must accompany all orders. Overseas please enquire separately. If one or more issues in an order are out of print, a credit note will be substituted which may be exchanged for cash or merchandise from the publisher.

The issue of expiry for each subscription will be printed on the subscriber's mailing label. Changes of address must be notified to the publisher at least 30 days before the effective change to ensure uninterrupted delivery.

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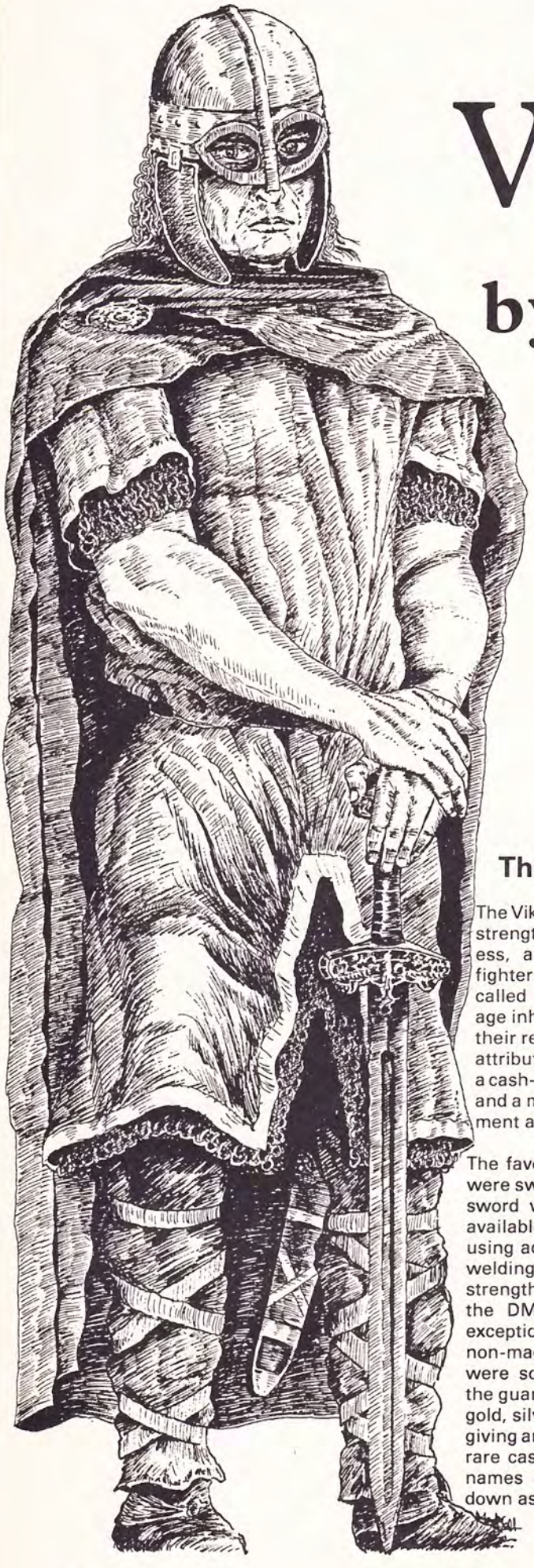


VIKING!

by Graeme Davis

The idea of this article is to present information about the Vikings which can be used to create role-playing adventures and campaigns in Norse or Norse-based settings such as, for instance, the Aesir of Robert E Howard's Hyborian Age. I shall be looking specifically at Viking character types and equipment, the kind of world in which a Viking PC might operate, and the legendary beasts and other problems which he or she might encounter.

The first of this occasional series, in **IMAGINE**™ magazine #17, drew a certain amount of criticism from readers who had difficulty in seeing how it could be applied to a role-playing campaign. This article is linked more closely to the **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS**® and **ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS**® games, although hopefully it should be of use to RPG players and referees using just about any system.

The PC Viking

The Vikings were a race who respected strength, courage and fighting prowess, and most Viking PCs will be fighters. They cannot justifiably be called barbarians, since the Viking-age inhabitants of Scandinavia, for all their reputed ferocity, had most of the attributes of civilisation; towns, trade, a cash-based market economy, literacy and a more or less centralised government and legal system.

The favourite weapons of the Vikings were sword, axe and spear. The Viking sword was one of the finest blades available in Europe at that time, forged using advanced techniques of pattern welding to give the right blend of strength, flexibility and a good edge. At the DM's option, Viking swords of exceptional quality might function as non-magical +1 weapons. Fine swords were sometimes richly decorated on the guard and pommel with an inlay of gold, silver or niello (an oxide of silver, giving an effect like black enamel) or, in rare cases, garnet. Some swords had names and they were often handed down as heirlooms from father to son.

Although the sword is the weapon most frequently mentioned in the sagas, the axe seems to have been the most common primary weapon, on the basis of archaeological evidence. This was probably because the sword was a lot more expensive and only used by the upper echelons of society. Some richly decorated axes have been found, though, so the axe may have had a prestige value of its own. As well as broad single-edged battle-axes, hand-axes were also common. One specialised form of axe was the *francisca*, a throwing axe with a long, slim head, slightly curved for better balance.

The spear was the Vikings' third weapon, but was not as popular as the sword or axe. Many warriors may have used javelins as a secondary weapon, but fighting spears were not particularly common. Both javelins and fighting spears had long, slim points like a mediaeval poinard; some spears were decorated.

The *scramasax* was more or less unique to the Vikings. It was a type of blade rather than a particular weapon and consisted of a bar of metal, sharpened at one edge and with one corner clipped off to make a point. This type of blade was generally used for simple, heavy, cleaver-type knives, anywhere between the size of a dagger and a short sword, but single-

edged longswords of the same design are not unknown. They would have been cheaper to produce than the Viking longsword, but of inferior quality (at the DM's option, some may be -1).

Another popular weapon was the longbow, although the sagas concentrate on more heroic hand-to-hand combat. Arrows are even found in women's graves, as are heavy *scramasaxes*. While female warriors are not common in Scandinavian literature, it is known that Viking women enjoyed a degree of freedom and equality far greater than their Saxon and Frankish counterparts.

Shields were circular, made of wood around a domed iron boss, and were frequently painted. In AD&D® game terms, they were of the 'small, wooden' variety. It is possible that the Vikings followed the Saxon practice of using the shield-boss as a main-gauche or mailed fist after the wood of the shield had been hacked from around it (D&D: Encumbrance 20cn, Damage 1-4 + Special Effect as blackjack; AD&D: Damage 1-4/1-2, treat as open hand for AC adjustments, treat as metal pommel for Pummelling Table adjustments). This seems to have been the only type of shield used by the Vikings and the 'Viking spike shield' in the **Tunnels & Trolls** rules has no basis in archaeological fact.

Armour was fairly rare, because of its high cost, but coats of ring, chain and scale-mail have been found, which would probably have belonged to wealthy jarls. Other warriors would have relied upon their shields and their heavy clothing of leather and furs for protection — treat this as leather armour, although (AD&D) studded leather armour is possible.

Viking helmets have long been the subject of a misconception that should be cleared up once and for all. They were never fitted with horns, wings or any other projecting decoration. These were used by the Celts of Gaul, Britain and Ireland (see #17), but never, *never* by the Vikings. Their typical helmet was a cap of leather with iron ribs, and sometimes a skin of iron. Nasal guards were common, sometimes enlarged into elaborate eyeguards of spectacle form. Some had heavy cheekpieces, similar to a Greek hoplite helmet. In AD&D terms most helmets are small, the heavier examples counting as great. The helmet from the Sutton Hoo ship burial in the British Museum has a complete faceplate; although this burial, strictly speaking, predates the Viking period, it is thought to be of Scandinavian design and might not be too out of place in a Viking context.

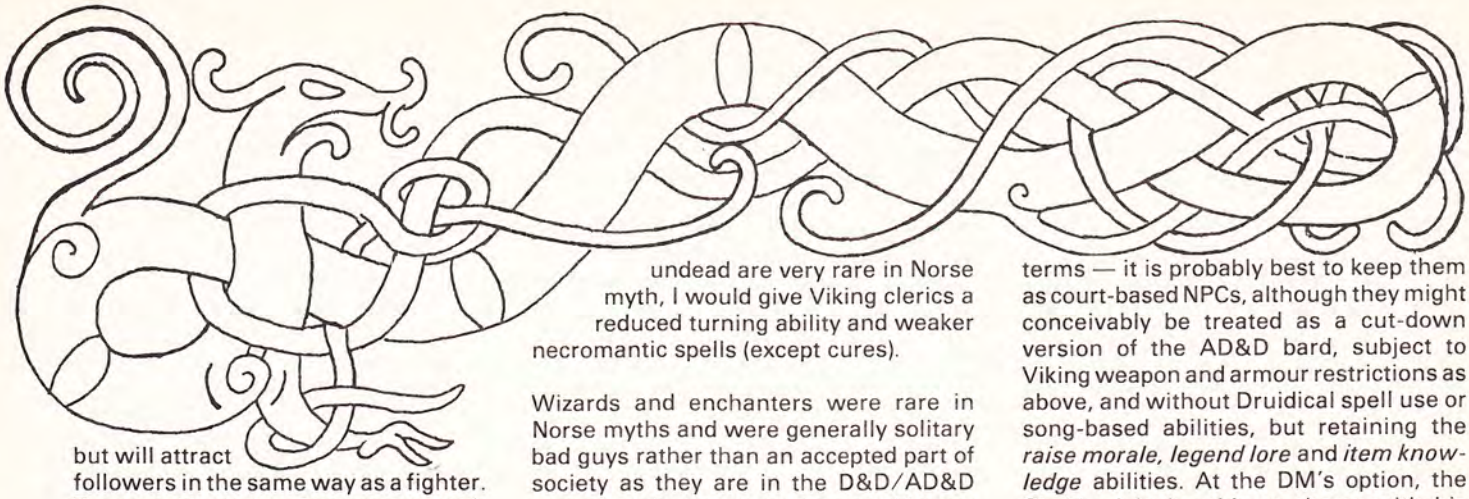
A special kind of Viking warrior is the Berserker. The Danish scholar Johannes Brondsted describes the Berserker as "a violent half-mad fighter.... (who) possessed terrifying strength while battle-fever *berserksgangr* was upon him, only to relapse afterwards into stupor and lethargy". They refused to wear armour in battle "and fought like mad dogs or wolves.... they had the strength of bears or bulls.... while neither fire nor iron could make an impression upon them." Berserkers were regarded with a degree of fear and mistrust even by other Vikings — in some texts the words 'berserker' and 'pirate' are used interchangeably, and the hero Grettir the Strong defeats several bands of Berserkers who wander the countryside of Iceland as brigands.

A violent half-mad fighter who possesses terrifying strength while battle-fever berserksgangr is upon him, fighting like mad dogs or wolves.... they had the strength of bears or bulls.... while neither fire nor iron could make an impression upon them

Essentially fighters, Berserkers do have some interesting special features. Here are some ideas on how PC Berserkers might be treated in D&D and AD&D; they vary a little from the 'monster' Berserkers in the rulebooks and the individual DM should feel free to adapt them as desired.

1. Attributes — Strength and Constitution must both be 12 or better and Wisdom must be 8 or less. A Berserker suffers a penalty of -4 to Charisma except when dealing with other Berserkers or monsters of a similar nature.
2. Alignment — Berserkers must be chaotic.
3. Experience — Berserkers gain experience only for fighting. Experience points and levels are as for Fighters.
4. Equipment — Berserkers may not wear armour of any kind, although they may carry shields. They may use any hand-to-hand or throwing weapon, subject to the cultural limitations given above. The DM must decide whether a Berserker would carry packs and other encumbering items.
5. Magic & Psionics — Berserkers may not use magical items except unintelligent magical weapons of permitted types. They may never use magical spells, spell-like effects or psionics.
6. *Berserksgangr* — Berserker rage will automatically start at the beginning of a fight, unless the Berserker is incapacitated (see below). It may also start at less convenient times — whenever a Berserker sees a weapon drawn or blood flowing, or at other times of stress, the Berserker must roll Wisdom or less on a d20; failure indicating he has gone berserk. The madness lasts for (20 - Wisdom) rounds after the fight has ended, and while it lasts the Berserker will fight continually, attacking friends if no enemies are within reach. It is this above all that makes Berserkers feared and distrusted. While *berserksgangr* lasts, the Berserker has the following advantages:
   a) the Berserker may add his level to any damage caused; damage bonuses are cumulative with bonuses for Strength etc.
   b) the Berserker can fight on in spite of zero or negative hit points, dying only when the hit point score goes below (0 - Constitution).
   c) immunity to fear, charm, hold and other mind-influencing attacks; such attacks induce *berserksgangr*.
   d) immunity to poisons while berserk, add level to die roll for all other saving throws.
   e) at the DM's option, any NPC or intelligent monster attacked by a Berserker might have to check morale, possibly at a penalty.

These advantages are lost when *berserksgangr* ends, however, and the following price must be paid:
   a) the Berserker is incapacitated; Strength and Constitution both drop to 3, regained at the rate of one point of each per 2 hours of rest. Hit points drop to a maximum of 1 per level; hit points lost through incapacitation cannot be recovered by cure spells or other magical means, but are recovered at the rate of 1hp per hour of rest.
   b) any poison attacks made while berserk now take effect, and saving throws must be made normally.
   c) if hit points are less than zero, the Berserker goes into a coma and may die (D&D: chance of survival is 20% + 5% per point of Constitution; AD&D: make a System Shock roll, based on original Con). Death is certain unless wounds are bound, etc. Cure spells can restore lost hit points to a maximum of 1 per level while the Berserker is incapacitated (see above), but take full effect thereafter.
7. Followers — a Berserker of 9th level or above cannot establish a stronghold,



but will attract followers in the same way as a fighter. These will all be Berserkers, with appropriate restrictions on weapons, armour and magical weapons. Numbers will be halved, but the rank-and-file will be Level 1 instead of O/NM; otherwise followers are determined as normal for a fighter character. This group relies on its leader for support, and may turn on him if not satisfied with his leadership. Since Berserkers may not establish a stronghold or rule an area, it is common for them to hire out as mercenaries or turn to banditry.

8. Lycanthropy — the word 'berserk' has two possible derivations, one meaning 'bare skinned' and the other 'bear skinned'. While the former reflects the Berserker's scorning of armour, the latter has given rise to theories that Berserkers were, or were thought to be, lycanthropes, whose animal side took over in battle; the character of Beorn in *The Hobbit* is an example of this explanation of Berserkers and one group of Berserkers in Grettir's Saga are called *ulfhednar* (wolfhides). The DM must decide whether Berserkers are lycanthropes, adding lycanthropic abilities from the D&D/AD&D rulebooks to the outlines given here if necessary; bear in mind, though, that giving Berserkers immunity to normal weapons on top of all their other abilities would make them immensely powerful — far more so than they appear to be from the sagas.

Although we know a good deal about the gods of the Vikings, not much evidence has survived about Viking priests and the temples which they served — this is mainly because most surviving Norse mythology was only written down after Scandinavia had become Christian. It seems likely, however, that Viking priests would be fairly close to the D&D/AD&D cleric, with restrictions on weapons and armour as given for fighters. The edged weapon rule need only apply at the DM's discretion (it comes from reports of Norman fighting priests at the battle of Hastings, some 200 years later), although it seems reasonable to restrict a cleric following Thor to using hammers. Spell use would be about as normal for a D&D/AD&D cleric — personally I would recommend the DM to tailor spell lists to the deity's character and interests (for example, a cleric of Thor might have lightning-based spells rather than those based on fire or earth magic), and since undead are very rare in Norse myth, I would give Viking clerics a reduced turning ability and weaker necromantic spells (except cures).

Wizards and enchanters were rare in Norse myths and were generally solitary bad guys rather than an accepted part of society as they are in the D&D/AD&D games; at the very best they would meet with universal distrust and suspicion. Some individuals had shapechanging powers — they may have been lycanthropes, or they may have had a limited shapechange ability like the AD&D Druid, whereby they could assume a limited number of forms. More powerful enchanters were able to weave great illusions — when Thor attacked the wizard Utgardloki (not to be confused with the god Loki), he levelled a mountain, believing it was the magician's head. Some giants and troll leaders were potent magicians, and the little-seen dwarves had the ability to create magical items.

Thieves, no doubt, were as active in Viking towns as they were in any others, but understandably they are not seen in the hero-tales of the sagas. Some heroes, like Grettir the Strong and Egil Skallagrimsson, may have been multiclassed fighter/thieves in AD&D terms, but the accent in the sagas was always on their fighting ability; they were more like Fafhrd than the Grey Mouser.

The D&D/AD&D Druid is based on a Celtic prototype, but there are characters in Norse myth who could fall into this class. These solitary, reclusive hermits and wise-women have more scope as NPCs than as PCs, but could be useful as random encounters or lead-ins to an adventure. They need not always be Druids — some might be AD&D sages, or NM/Level 0 NPCs with a single isolated talent such as divination or scrying.

Despite the fact that elves and dwarves form part of Norse mythology, these demi-humans never adventured with humans; both races were reclusive and had few dealings with mankind. Half-elves are not unknown, but are extremely rare; those that do figure in myth were always raised among humans and had few magical abilities. Halflings, of course, do not belong in the Viking world.

One final type of Viking character is the Skald. These poets were to the Vikings what the bards were to the Celts — storytellers, memory banks and court poets. They seem to have concentrated on the spoken word rather than music; many jarls kept a skald as part of their retinue to immortalise their glorious deeds in verse and add to their renown. Skalds are difficult to treat in D&D/AD&D terms — it is probably best to keep them as court-based NPCs, although they might conceivably be treated as a cut-down version of the AD&D bard, subject to Viking weapon and armour restrictions as above, and without Druidical spell use or song-based abilities, but retaining the *raise morale, legend lore* and *item knowledge* abilities. At the DM's option, the Skald might be able to charm with his poetry as the Bard does with song, and to compensate for the loss of Druidical and song-based abilities, Skalds might not be required to gain experience as a thief before skaldic training begins; though this would mean the loss of any thiefly abilities.

Religion and Philosophy

The most popular Viking gods, on the basis of archaeological evidence, seem to have been Thor, Odin and Tyr. Thor was a fighter's god, strong, heroic and fearless, and was the essence of the true Viking hero. Additionally, his office as god of the sky, winds and storms made him especially popular with this seafaring race. Images of Thor's hammer, worn as pendants, were by far the most popular items of jewellery worn by the Vikings — as popular as the cross among their Saxon contemporaries. It had no particular powers, as far as we know, but functioned simply as a 'holy symbol' in D&D/AD&D terms; of course, the DM can introduce magical Thor's hammer pendants fairly easily if desired.

Tyr, as the guardian of the law, was another important god, if not as popular as Thor. Although the Vikings may have seemed like lawless barbarians to outsiders, they had their own code of legal practice which was the foundation of their society. Every meeting of a *thing* (see page 5) took place under Tyr's watchful eye, and he saw that justice was done.

While Odin was the leader of the gods, he was not in the same position as the Greek god Zeus. He was a shadowy figure, feared as well as worshipped, who could bring good or ill. While Thor stood for the strength of the warrior and Tyr for the strength of law, Odin represented the darker, wilder force of magic. Like magic, he was unpredictable, often dangerous and always mysterious. In many ways, he stood for all that the Norsemen couldn't understand or come to terms with. While it was always necessary to treat him with respect, no amount of offerings could guarantee a favourable or even rational reaction from him.

Besides these major gods, others were worshipped by those who wanted their favour — Freyr by those wanting good

crops or fruitful livestock, for example. Many other gods, like Bragi, Nagni and Vidar, seem not to have been worshipped as such; they seem to appear only as 'extras' in the legends. Loki, though a major figure in mythology, was almost certainly never worshipped or regarded as anything but a devil.

The Viking character and philosophy was a straightforward one. Because the afterlife of feasting and drinking in Valhalla was open only to the greatest warriors, they had little fear of death — to die well in battle and be gathered by the Valkyries was a glorious thing, and the death a Viking feared most was a peaceful one in his bed. The Vikings knew that all things came to an end — even the gods were doomed to die at Ragnarok — and they knew that fame was the only immortality. To live well and die gloriously, and have the saga of your deeds retold wherever warriors feasted; that was the Viking dream.

The Vikings valued strength, courage and integrity, and could have no respect for weakness or petty officialdom. If a few boatloads of men were able to plunder and burn a port, for example, then the fault lay with the inhabitants of the port for having inadequate defences. If any man chose to be discourteous to them, they assumed that he was prepared to back his words with action. One of the earliest records of the Vikings in England tells of a few ships arriving, apparently peacefully in a port. The king's reeve, a Saxon official, went to deal with the newcomers and they didn't like his high-handed manner, so they killed him. The Saxons were horrified at the murder of the king's officer, while the Vikings, for their part, probably couldn't understand why the Saxons put up with being treated like that.

Viking Life & Adventures

Viking society seems to have consisted of three classes. The Jarl class was the warrior nobility, and nearly all the heroes of the sagas are from this class. Next was the peasant class, the small freehold farmers who formed the backbone of Scandinavian society, like the yeoman farmers of mediaeval England. Finally there was the thrall class — bondservants who seem to have been little more than slaves; little is known about them, and they do not seem to have been numerous.

The king, where there was one (Iceland had no king), was not an absolute monarch like his contemporaries in England and France, but was in a way the first among equals — there was little distinction in the jarl class. He simply ratified the acts of the nobles, and could not act against them.

Viking law was based upon the *thing*, a local assembly of free men, before whom all disputes and legal proceedings were heard. Each district had its own *thing*, and there was an upper layer of regional or *Landthing* which served as high courts for important decisions and appeals. Finally there was the *Althing*, the highest legal authority in the land.

While at home, the jarls saw to the running of their farms and estates, but during the summer, many set sail on trading or raiding voyages. They may have done both, although there is a great deal of difference between trading and fighting ships on the basis of wreck finds.

The jarls each maintained a retinue of *huscarls*, who served as a bodyguard and personal staff in peacetime and as a fighting unit led by the jarl in war. The king's body of *huscarls* was called the *hird*, and formed the nucleus of the national army in time of war.

Most PC Vikings will start off as *huscarls* in the retinue of a PC or NPC jarl. Low-level adventures might consist of missions assigned by the jarl, and many will be fairly mundane. The party might be sent to deal with complaints from peasants, ranging from domestic or neighbourly disputes to attacks by bandits or monsters.

Bandits will be more or less as detailed in the rulebooks, subject to the notes on weapons and armour above. Some may be Berserkers.

Monsters can be almost anything threatening small communities, ravaging crops, and so on. Depending on the size and level of the party some possibilities are:

Animals — a notorious bear, boar, wolf pack or similar. These animals are too dangerous for normal men to deal with, and will have the maximum hit points and abilities as given in the relevant monster description.

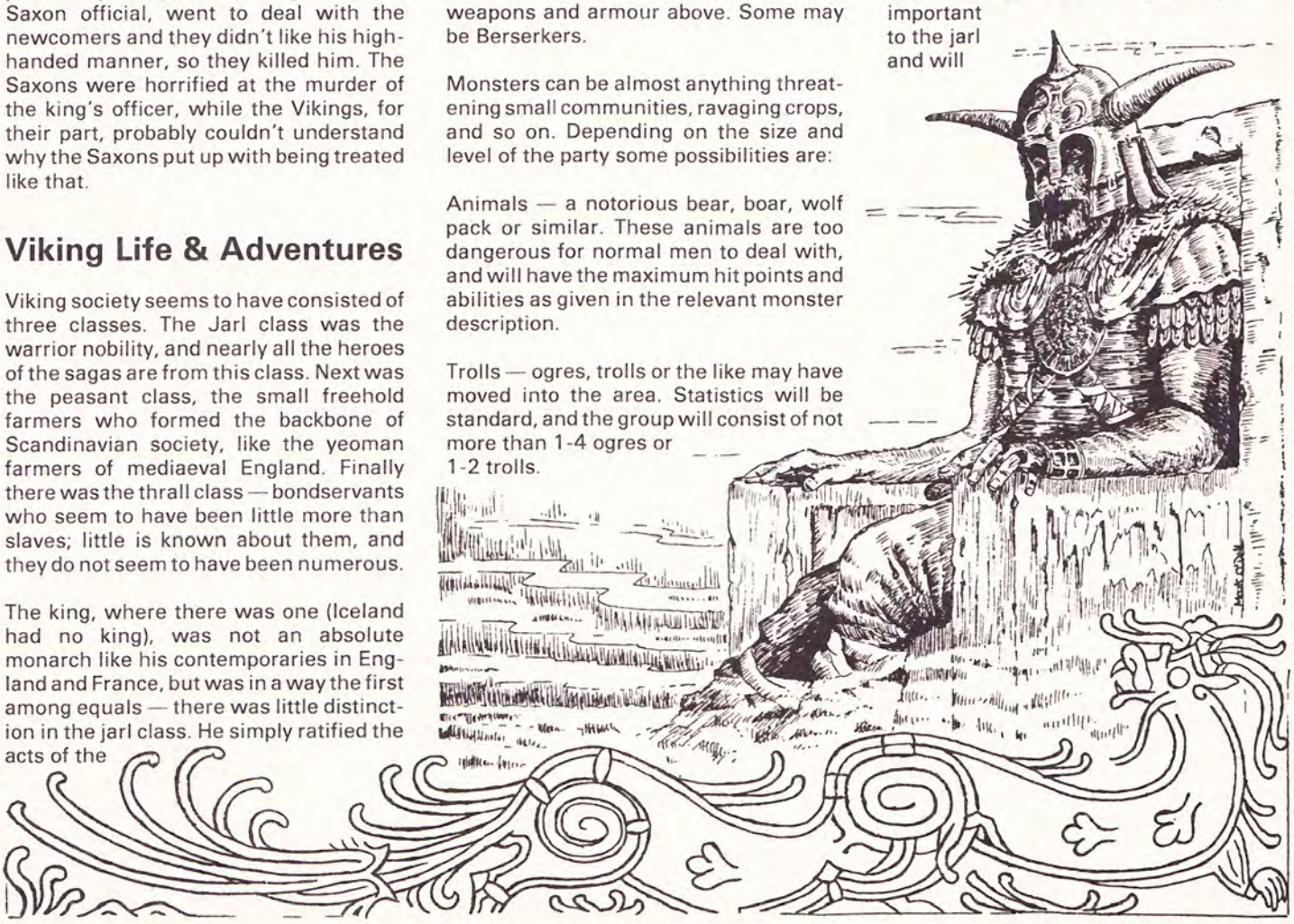
Trolls — ogres, trolls or the like may have moved into the area. Statistics will be standard, and the group will consist of not more than 1-4 ogres or 1-2 trolls.

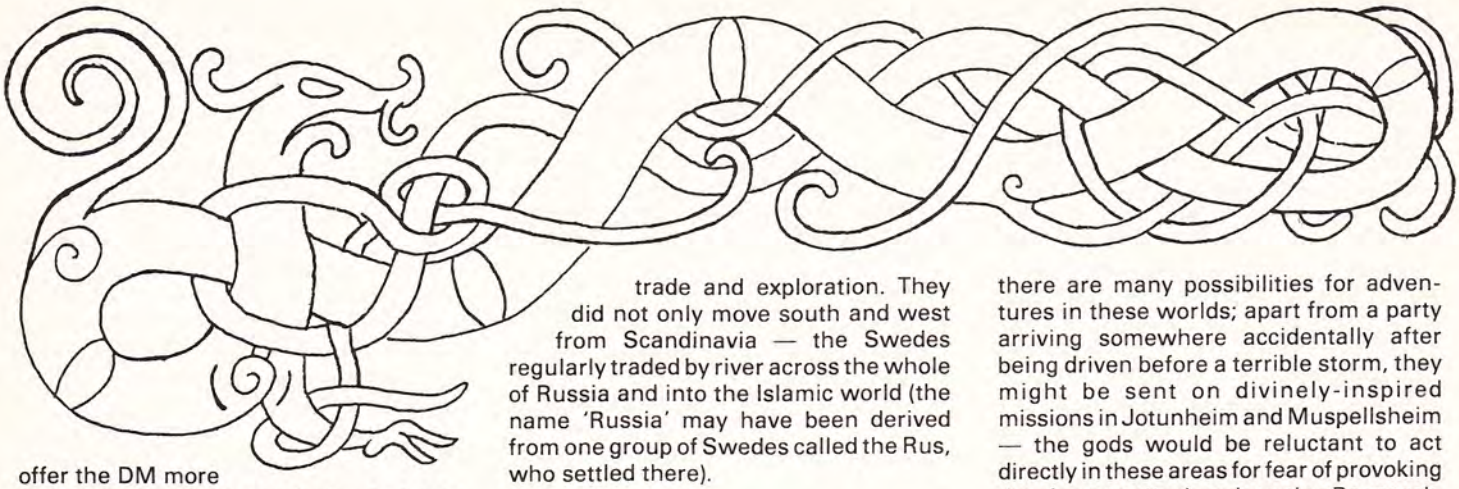
Lycanthrope — the area is being ravaged by a lycanthrope — equal chance of werewolf, werebear or wereboar. As an added complication, the lycanthrope may be a prominent resident of the village, or closely related, and his/her kinsmen may seek to protect him/her and prevent the party from finding anything out.

Tomtra — the Nissen and Tomtra (singular Nis and Tomte) are domestic sprites of more modern Scandinavian folklore, but it is likely that they date back to the Viking period. Essentially they are similar to the AD&D Booka detailed in the **FIEND FOLIO®** tome — naturally invisible sprites who bring luck and help the household to prosper when they are well looked after (generally by small offerings of food), and who play embarrassing, dangerous and sometimes fatal practical jokes on the householders if they are neglected or offended. For the D&D game, they should be treated as Sprites (Basic Set), except that they are naturally invisible, and that a single Tomte can cast a **curse** spell on its own. A series of accidents on a farm might be due to an offended or neglected Tomte or Nis; they might appear similar to poltergeist phenomena, and the party might be sent to investigate.

Witch/hag — this may be anything from a harmless but unpopular old woman to a village threatened by an evil witch or AD&D Annis or Greenhag (see **MMII**).

Many adventures need not involve monsters or magic at all, but will be just as important to the jarl and will





offer the DM more chance to test the players' role-playing in non-combat situations. For example:

1. The jarl has just heard a dispute between two farmers, Thorgil Erikson and Grim Asbjornsen. Judgement has been made in favour of Thorgil (for the sake of argument, the case could involve a piece of land which both claim to own), but Grim is not satisfied and has decided to put his case before the local *Landthing* which meets in a few days' time. The party is assigned by the jarl to escort Thorgil to the *Landthing*. If Thorgil does not appear there, for whatever reason, he will lose the case by default. Winter weather will add a few hazards to the journey, while there is the constant threat of attack by Grim and party of his relatives. Alternatively, the party may be ordered to escort a prisoner to the *Landthing*, and he may try to escape during the course of the journey.

2. The jarl is visited by another jarl, or perhaps even the king, accompanied by 20-40 *huscarls* and other attendants. Someone who has a score to settle with the PC's jarl will try to set the two sides against each other. This could be done in several ways; caskets of gifts could be stolen or exchanged for manure, the guests' drink could be poisoned, something belonging to the jarl could be stolen and planted among the visitors' possessions, and so on. The party must find out what's going on and stop whoever is responsible; to avoid embarrassing their jarl further in front of his visitor, they must accomplish this without the visitors ever being aware that anything is wrong.

These home-based adventures will take place in the winter, and bad weather, thin ice and hungry wolves will add spice to any adventure (see Gordon Barbour's article **At the Mountains of the North Wind** in **IMAGINE**™ magazine #12). Mountain passes will be closed, lakes and rivers will be frozen, and much ground will only be passable by sledge or on skis. It is a good idea to start a Viking-based campaign in the winter, to give the party time for a few low-level, experience-gaining adventures before the rigours of the campaigning season.

It was in the summer that the Vikings took to the seas on raids and on voyages of trade and exploration. They did not only move south and west from Scandinavia — the Swedes regularly traded by river across the whole of Russia and into the Islamic world (the name 'Russia' may have been derived from one group of Swedes called the Rus, who settled there).

Raids can provide the basis for a number of hack-and-slay scenarios; targets might range from small island monasteries, which could be taken by pure force, to better fortified trading ports, which posed more of a problem. These raid scenarios are limited in their possibilities, however, and voyages of trade and exploration will provide more interesting adventures. Despite the reports of Viking raids in Saxon chronicles, scholars are coming to the conclusion that raids were comparatively infrequent compared to more peaceful voyages — we have a biased picture today because peaceful voyages weren't 'news' like the raids.

While trading voyages provide an opportunity to stretch players' role-playing and the occasional brush with pirates or aquatic monsters, voyages of exploration have more possibilities for adventure. In addition to the Swedes, trading inland to the Islamic world, it is well known that the Vikings explored most of the northern Atlantic, colonising Iceland and Greenland, and, according to increasing evidence, a small area of North America. Frequently these intrepid travellers were looking for somewhere to lie low while the 'heat' died down at home; Iceland and Greenland were popular refuges for those who had just lost serious arguments with their king.

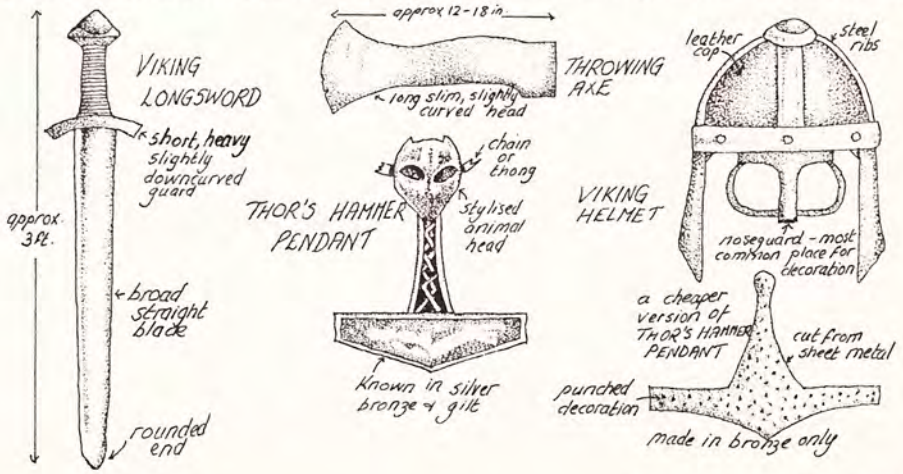
As well as the historic exploration undertaken by the Vikings, a party might also have the chance to explore the world according to Viking myth. Some ideas for such play are covered in a later article — there are many possibilities for adventures in these worlds; apart from a party arriving somewhere accidentally after being driven before a terrible storm, they might be sent on divinely-inspired missions in Jotunheim and Muspellsheim — the gods would be reluctant to act directly in these areas for fear of provoking the giants to attack and starting Ragnarok, the war at the end of the world.

Magic & Monsters

Magic is rare in Norse mythology — most spells and magic items are restricted to the gods. There are a few enchanters and wise-women, but not many. Despite this, a Viking based D&D/AD&D campaign could accommodate magical weapons and armour quite easily; other items, such as rings, amulets and talismans, could be introduced at the DM's discretion, but will be rarer — 'foreign' items such as the Egyptian-based **scarab of protection**, should be avoided.

The most common monsters are giant/ogre types. Definitions are vague — the words 'giant', 'ogre' and 'troll' are sometimes used to describe the same being, but most types of giant, ogre and troll are usable. Since some giants had shape-changing and other magic, a monster such as the AD&D Ogre Mage could even be used, despite its usual Japanese origins. It is worth noting here, too, that the D&D/AD&D troll owes little to Norse mythology, having been lifted lock, stock and three-foot nose from Poul Anderson's **Three Hearts and Three Lions**.

Another popular monster was the barrow-dweller. Breaking into burial-mounds in search of treasure was apparently a common pastime, and sometimes, as in the saga of Grettir the Strong, the occupant put up unexpected resistance. Although this type of monster clearly



inspired Tolkien's barrow-wights in *The Lord of the Rings*, these barrow-dwellers are fully material and do not have the level drain ability of the D&D/AD&D game Wight; they seem to be more like a faster, smarter Zombie or Mummy or a non-paralysing Ghoul. All the same, Wights might not be too out of place in this role, but ghost-type undead like Spectres and Wraiths are unknown.

As for other monsters, almost anything given in encounter tables for arctic or cold temperate regions is usable, but beings from other planes and other mythologies should be avoided. Normal and giant animals, and animals with magical or other enhanced abilities, such as the AD&D Winter Wolf, can all be used, provided that they fit in with the setting (no camels or tigers, for example). Giants, ogres and trolls are all fine, and stats for races like Orcs and Goblins can be used for lesser trolls, which are fairly common. Rulebook Trolls can be used as the more powerful Troll lords and Kings. Any kind of Elf, Dwarf or Gnome can be used, as can most kinds of Hags and Dragons. Lycanthropes are another favourite, and most kinds of shapechanger can be used without stretching the mythology too far — shapechanging was the most common type of magic in mythology. Essentially, the DM should avoid monsters from other mythologies, and beings from other planes such as demons and elementals, and should be guided by instinct when considering other monsters. If they feel right, and especially if they can be justified from mythology (subterranean lizards, for example, might be the spawn of the Midgard Serpent), then use them. There is no point in limiting a campaign to re-runs of myths, and provided the basic Norse flavour is retained, there is nothing to worry about.

Mass Battles

Large Scandinavian armies took the field only rarely (see *Macbeth*, Act I, Sc 2 for one example). Raiding parties varied in size; groups as small as 3 ships and as large as 350 are recorded, but the average is 25-35 ships, each carrying 20-40 men. Here are a few notes on Vikings in mass combat, both for the **AD&D BATTLESYSTEM**™ fantasy combat system, and for the **War Machine** rules in the **D&D Companion Set**.

1. **BATTLESYSTEM** — Viking forces should be treated as regular infantry consisting of 1st level Fighters with a 7th-9th level leader. Alternatively, they might be treated as elite skirmishers with the ability to enter closed formation, possibly needing to check discipline frequently to stay in closed formation. Most other stats can be derived from the notes on PC Vikings given above. Vikings have a naturally high morale, so a modifier of +1 or +2 might be awarded at the referee's discretion, balanced with a negative modifier to discipline — they tend to be more individualistic fighters than, say, the Roman legions. Jarls will invariably fight with their units — for game purposes, assume that each jarl will command 1-10 ships or up to 300 men. While the warriors' loyalty to their jarl was unshakeable, they will never be of above average loyalty as mercenaries; they find it difficult to respect men who pay others to fight for them.

Although the system does not cover sea battles, referees might like to bear in mind that Viking ships are built to be run in through surf and beached at speed, and the Vikings could beach and disembark in one swift operation; I would suggest that they be allowed to do so in open formation in one movement phase.

Berserkers are a special case. Again, most of the raw stats can be taken from the notes on PCs; they will always be mobs, with ML of 19 or 20 and DL of 0, but should gain an AR modifier as if in skirmish formation. If any figure, enemy or otherwise, is within the charge range of a Beserker figure which is not engaged (except at the start of a battle), there is a good chance that it will be attacked — the referee might use a discipline check here, based on a theoretical DL of 8. Needless to say, Berserkers never rout and are never in command.

Referees should consult the earlier notes carefully when drawing up the roster sheet for a unit of Berserkers. HD/fig should be 1½ times normal, reflecting the ability to fight on negative hit points, and so should damage (eg, for a figure of 1st level Berserkers with longswords they are 15 and D8+D4 respectively instead of 10 and D8). If a Berserker unit goes for 3 or more game rounds without being engaged or finding any figure within its charge range, reduce its strength by half in every successive game round; eg, a unit of 100 Berserkers (10 figures) loses 5 figures on the fourth round, 2½ (2 killed, 1 wounded) on the fifth, 1¼ (1 killed, 1 wounded) on the sixth, and so on. These are not actually killed, but represent collapse from exhaustion; it pays to keep Berserkers busy.

Attack by Berserkers can be terrifying. A unit attacked by Berserkers must check morale every game round, with a modifier of -2 in the first round only.

2. **The War Machine** — the following points should be borne in mind when calculating a BFR for a Viking force:

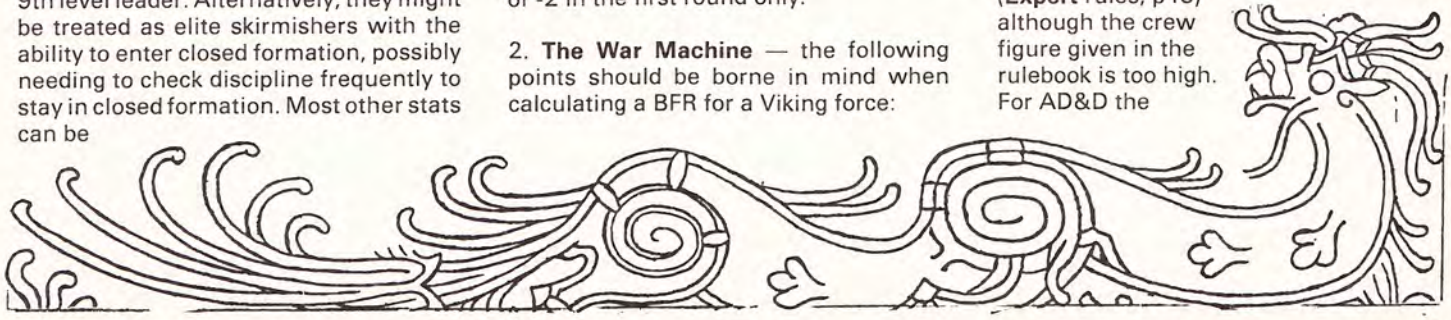
Experience Factor: roll 2d10 for number of victories, 1d6 for number of routs.
Training Factor: assume 20 weeks' training per year — the jarl class are professional warriors. The jarl is with his men at all times, and *huscarls* stay 'on duty' all the time.
Equipment Factor: Viking longswords are of excellent quality, but are rarely used by anyone except jarls. All other weapons are of good to average quality, except *scramasaxes* which are of average to poor quality (use a base value of zero). Most Vikings have a second weapon of equal quality; the most popular combination is axe and spear.
Special Troop Factor: Berserkers are treated as 'Special troops'.

In addition, Vikings always have high morale; I would suggest an additional bonus of +10. These mass combat figures are given for Viking infantry — cavalry was not unknown, although it was fairly rare. The Vikings did not use chariots or catapults.

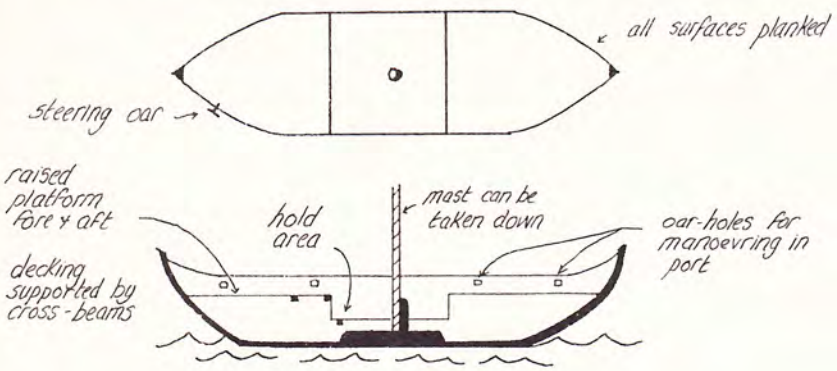
Viking Ships

Ships were a vital part of Viking life, and no article on Viking gaming would be complete without some consideration of them. Plans for a trading vessel and a warship are given overleaf, based on a series of wrecks from Denmark. The trader was mainly a sailing vessel, with a few oars for manoeuvring in port; crew figures can only be guessed at, but about half-a-dozen seems reasonable. This ship is not designed to be beached; unlike the warship, it needs a good harbour. In the D&D game this vessel would count as a sailing ship, small (**Expert** rules, p43), and in the Advanced game it would be a merchant, small (**DMG**, p54).

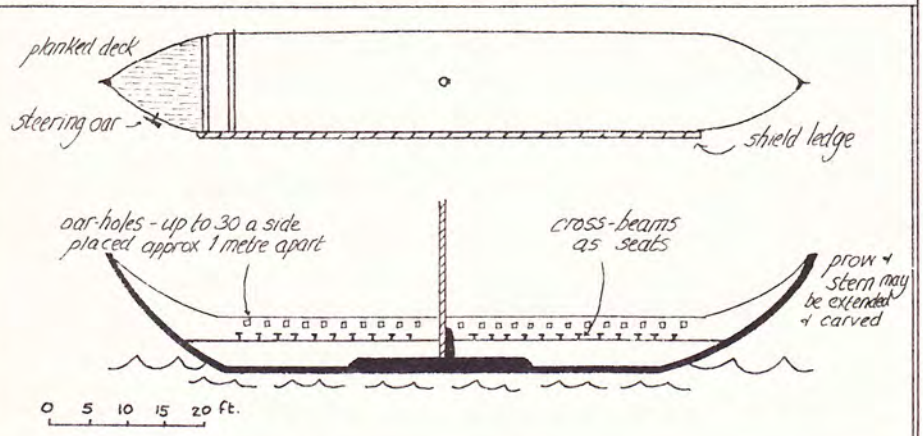
The warship also relied mainly on its sail when at sea, but would row into the attack under the power of 2 or more oars. The mast could be taken down easily, and one ship found in Norway was fitted with a pair of T-shaped racks, to hold either the mast or the oars while the other means of propulsion was in use. The crewmen would have sat either on the raised cross beams or on their sea-chests to row. On either side of the ship is a shield-ledge — shields would probably only have been hung on it when the ship was entering port, since they would be needed if the ship was rowing into battle and they would get soaked or lost if they were hung out while the ship was at sea. For D&D this type of warship counts as a longship, (**Expert** rules, p43) although the crew figure given in the rulebook is too high. For AD&D the

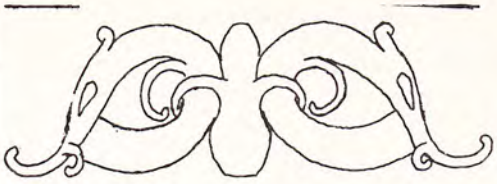


KNORR VIKING TRADING SHIP



DRAKKAR VIKING WARSHIP


planked deck
steering oar
shield ledge
oar-holes - up to 30 a side placed approx 1 metre apart
cross-beams as seats
prow & stern may be extended & carved
0 5 10 15 20 ft.



Viking warship is treated as a galley (**DMG**, p53), and again, the crew figure given is too high. The average crew of a Viking warship was between 25 and 36 men. Viking ships, of course, did not mount catapults or any other heavy weapons; where sea battles are recorded in the sagas, they consist purely of boarding actions and shipboard fighting.

Bibliography

These titles are fairly easily obtainable, and will be useful to anyone wanting to look further at the Vikings and their world.

Johannes Brondsted — **The Vikings**, Pelican

H R Ellis Davidson — **Gods and Myths of Northern Europe**, Pelican

Egil's Saga — Penguin Classics

Laxadaela Saga — Penguin Classics

The Saga of Grettir the Strong — Everyman Translation

Several other sagas are available in Penguin Classics, and will be useful to the interested reader.

Graeme Davis

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RUNE MAGIC

by David Hill

The subject of runes and runecraft can provide not only a veritable feast of fascinating facts, but also a wealth of ideas for a GM to employ in a scenario, or for an actual character invention — the wizard-priest!

To begin at the beginning, what are runes? To answer this we must go back into the distant mists of time. From the myths of ancient civilizations it emerges that writing was looked on as a gift from the gods, the third most important after fire and the wheel. Its origins are wrapped in veils of secrecy. The word rune probably comes from the Norse *runar*, meaning magic sign and the Old German *runa*, meaning to whisper, or a secret. Secrecy has always been at the centre of the runic script. With these symbols the writer was able to possess a magical alphabet made up of symbols which were believed to contain occult powers in the hands of a magician.

A clue to the origins of runic script can be found in the rock carvings of the Bronze Age tribes who settled in Northern Italy and Germany. In the early German rock carvings, sunwheels, swastikas and other symbols were considered sacred by tribal magicians. The swastika symbol was adopted by Hitler, and in reversed form became the emblem of the dictator. The light of the sun wheel became the dark power of the waning moon.

It is believed that the origins of the symbols can be traced back to the Teutonic gods or were the invention of Odin. Odin represented the wild aspects of nature — the storm and thunder. He was the patron god of magicians and wizards. It is because of this that he is viewed as the inventor of runes. To gain runic knowledge and wisdom, Odin suspended himself from a tree, and while peering down in pain he saw and snatched up the runes from the depths of the earth. By possessing the runes, Odin became the first runemaster and gained enormous supernatural powers. He was able to fly, change his shape into a wolf, raven or eagle, predict the future — and even raise the dead. To his earthly followers he promised the same gifts.

Some swords bore runic inscriptions to Odin, and these etched engravings were believed to make the blade powerful in the hands of the owner. From such inscriptions grew legends of swords which drank blood in battle and which killed anyone who got in their way.

The circular shield of the beserker consisted of wooden strips — and in the centre was Odin's runic symbol ↑ . Confident that Odin would afford them protection, the beserkers charged into battle without fear of death.

In Sweden, the priest caste was known as *attiba* (wizard); in Denmark as *thurls* (reciters of spells). Such wizards could have been descendants of the magicians of the Bronze Age. The caste was quickly recognised from the appearance of its members; they wore bizarre headgear of woodland animal pelts, woollen cloaks dyed blue (Odin's colour) and footwear made from rabbit's skin. An essential piece of equipment was a rune-covered staff from which hung a pouch filled with herbs and charms. The archaeological discovery of a Bronze Age burial mound containing the remains of a shaman, revealed artifacts which would have been essential to a Norse wizard. A bag contained amber beads, a conch shell, a falcon's claw, the bones of a snake, a bronze dagger, a squirrel's skull and the dried intestines of a small rodent. Near to the body and wrapped in an animal skin was a forked hazel twig — possibly the wizard's wand.

Runic script consisted of angular strokes which made up unusual letter shapes. There were no round nor curved symbols because they were originally cut into hardwood with a knife; such engravings prohibited the curve. Later they were embossed on metal and leather, and coloured with pigment. In Scandanavia, human blood was used by the wizard in the belief that this made the runes more potent....

Sacrifices consisted of humans, cattle and grain. When a human sacrifice was made, it is likely that criminals or prisoners of war would have been the victims, ritually strangled by a leather thong. Well preserved bodies of such victims have been found in bogs in Iron Age Denmark. The magicians also possessed the power to liberate their own spirits, which could travel and commune with the gods. Rune magic was very potent. It was thought that the incorrect use of a rune could cause a great disaster, and if a sick person was being cured by a runemaster, incorrect casting could cause the patient to die. On raids, the Vikings often took a wizard-priest with them to divine omens and to protect them against the magic of their enemies.

The runemaster had different types of rune magic — battle runes, cursing runes, health runes, love runes, death runes. One was said to be so potent that even the dead could be raised. Runes were carved on the grave to fend off robbers, and they were also used to fend off evil and bad luck.

To protect themselves from harm, people would wear pendants, brooches, rings or amulets on which were carved the runes that warded off evil spirits.

By visiting a wizard-priest, a person could have the future foretold. Bark stripped from a tree (usually yew or hazel) was considered to possess the greatest magic, and was cut into strips on which runes were carved or drawn. These were then cast on a white sheet. A sacrifice of a small animal was required, and then three of the strips were picked up at random, to provide the message. Another method was to paint the symbols on small pebbles and then shake them from a leather bag — those which landed face up were used for the divination.

The magic of the runes slowly died when Christianity came to the Norsemen, although it survived until the seventeenth century in Iceland.

Below are a few Germanic runes with their Anglo-Saxon names. These can easily be incorporated into an rpg.

Porn This was named after a giant or demon which lived in the depths of the forest. Use of this rune summons the demon.

Os Any god; used to invoke any member of the Norse mythos.

Ken A torch or light. The rune sign of ancient fire.

Haegl Ice or hail. The weapons of the frost giants. Used to invoke winter storms.

The need which drives man to succeed by accomplishing impossible deeds.

Ger Odin's Spear. This can be used to summon a super weapon.

Pear A mystery name in the rune alphabet.

Eolh Defence or protection; a rune to ward off evil and unwanted influences, or trespassers.

Tir The wargod Tew. Carved on amulets and shields for protection in battle.

Lagu Water, the sacred liquid. Used call up water in times of hardship and drought.

Individual rune symbols were also grouped together to form spells for cursing, predicting, healing and attacking.

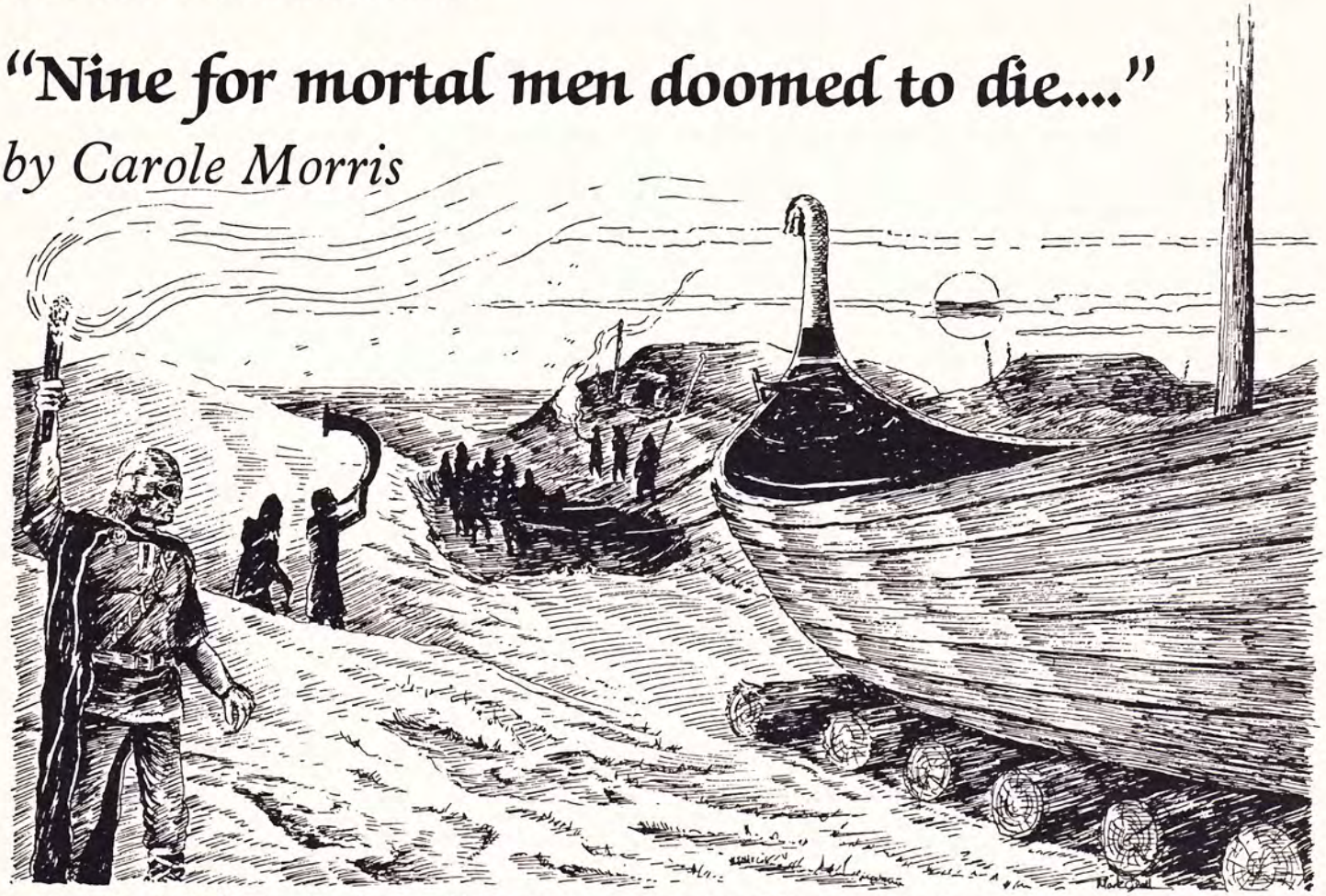
If runes are to be incorporated into a Norse campaign, their use will have to be strictly controlled, or player characters will be wandering around looking like advertising billboards. Runes should be carved or drawn by a runemaster. If these are to be the equivalant of the Magic User class, there should be a 10% chance per level of the caster that the rune has the desired effect, and a 20% chance, reduced by 2% per level, that it will have the opposite effect to that desired. This way, runes can be used as 'stored' spells, rather like scrolls or certain magical items, without providing everybody with unlimited magical powers.

Hopefully, the above will provide you with ideas. For the imaginative, it should not prove difficult to compose a runic 'language', complete with interpretations, for your campaign.

David Hill

"Nine for mortal men doomed to die...."

by Carole Morris



In line with my 'colleague in crime', Graeme Davis, I acknowledge that some readers have found it difficult to use mythological source material in their role-playing campaigns if it is presented just as straight legends. This article aims to bring you some of the flavour of one Norse epic legend — the *Saga of the Volsungs* — but then I'll pick up and expand some of the more interesting elements of the story so that they can be used as PCs, NPCs, brief encounters, magic items, etc, in Norse campaigns.

The story of the Volsung family has its origins in the Germanic lands of the fifth and sixth centuries AD, and survives today in the Elder Edda, a series of poems written down by the Icelandic historian, Snorri Sturluson in the 13th century. Wagner used some of this story in his cycle of operas *The Ring of the Niebelung*, and the idea of the ring of power was adapted by Tolkien in the *Lord of the Rings*.

Some of the story's main elements are set out below, but first, a brief word about Fate, for it is the implacable power of Fate which drives men to perform what seem to us to be improbable acts and casts them to their ultimate ends. To the Viking, the belief in the power of Fate (personified in the form of the three Nornir — Urdr, Verdandi and Skuld) probably outweighed any faith in gods and goddesses; even Odin himself was under their power. Death could not be avoided — one could only die well, fulfilling all one's oaths and duties of kinship and loyalty.

Volsung was a great grandson of Odin. He built a magnificent hall around an oak tree called the Branstock whose branches rose above the roof and whose trunk stood in the main part of the hall. Volsung had ten sons, the youngest of whom was called Sigmund, and a daughter, Signy. At a feast where Signy was betrothed to king Siggeir of Gothland, a barefooted stranger in a spotted cloak came into the hall carrying a great sword. The stranger had only one eye (a sure sign that it was Odin in disguise), and he plunged the sword into the Branstock so that it sank in up to the hilt, saying that only he who could pull it out was worthy to have it as a gift. Then he disappeared. No-one could move the sword except Sigmund, who drew it smoothly out of the tree. Because Sigmund would not sell it to Siggeir, the latter became a deadly enemy of the family and eventually caused the deaths of Volsung and Sigmund's nine elder brothers.

One story tells how Signy (by now the wife of Siggeir) changed likenesses with a witch-wife and went to visit her brother Sigmund, who was living in exile in the forest. He did not recognise her, and slept with her for three nights. She later had a son, Sinfjotli, whom she sent into the forest to live with his father. Between them, Sigmund and Sinfjotli had a series of adventures, including one time when they came across a house of two skin-changers — men who had the ability to become wolves at certain times. When the pair of heroes entered the house, the shape-changers were asleep with their wolf-skins hung up on the wall. Needless to say, the heroes borrowed the skins, and rampaged through the forests causing havoc and slaying men for their gold.

When Sinfjotli had grown to manhood, Sigmund took him to Siggeir's hall to avenge his father and brothers. However, Siggeir caught them and buried them alive in a huge burial barrow of stones and turf with a massive stone set between them. Luckily, Signy had managed to smuggle Sigmund's sword into the barrow as it was being covered over, and our two gallant heroes then used it to saw through the megalith and then cut through the stones of the barrow. They set fire to Siggeir's hall and thus killed all inside, including Signy, who chose to die with her husband.

Late on in his life, Sigmund married a princess called Hjordis, but not long after was forced to fight a bloody battle with King Lyngi who had been another of Hjordis' suitors. Sigmund was outnumbered, but no-one could overcome him or stand before his mighty sword until a one-eyed man in a blue cloak (guess who?) held up a billhook against Sigmund's sword, smashing it into two fragments. Sigmund was mortally wounded, but managed to entrust the broken sword to Hjordis for the son she would soon bear him. From then on, he said, the sword should be called Gram.

Hjordis was carried away over the sea by Viking warriors who had landed near the battlefield in their ships. She was taken to the hall of King Hjalprek, and when her son was eventually born, he

was called Sigurd — destined to be the greatest of all men. One day, when Sigurd asked the king for a horse of his own, the king told him to choose one from his herds. When Sigurd went to do this, he was met by a long-bearded old man (yes, you've guessed it!) who arranged for him to choose a grey horse, which he called Grani, and it was descended from Sleipnir, Odin's own eight-footed steed.

Sigurd was fostered by a craftsman-smith called Regin who taught him many languages, all manner of arts and crafts, how to play chess and the runelore. One day Regin told Sigurd about his own father Hreidmar and his brothers Fafnir and Otter. Regin had become a smith and could work iron, gold and silver, Otter was a great fisherman and could change into an otter by day, while Fafnir was a selfish, greedy man who wanted everything for himself. A dwarf called Andvari (who had a massive hoard of gold) lived, in the disguise of a pike, under a great waterfall where Otter used to swim. One day, the gods Odin, Loki and Hoenir came past this waterfall. Loki threw a stone at Otter and killed him, and he took the otter skin as a prize. When Hreidmar found out, he demanded a pile of gold in recompense, high enough to cover the whole otter skin when it was held vertical with feet on the ground. Odin sent Loki to find gold, and with the help of a net from Ran, the sea-goddess, he caught Andvari and took all his gold from him to cover the otter skin, including a special gold ring (the ring of Wagner fame). Andvari cursed the gold and swore that it would bring about the downfall of anyone who possessed it.

Regin told Sigurd how Fafnir had murdered Hreidmar to get the gold for himself, and how, as he became more evil, he changed into a huge dragon to guard his pile of treasure. Sigurd was convinced that Regin had been cheated of his share and so asked him to make a sword to help him slay Fafnir. Regin made three swords, but Sigurd smashed each one on the smith's anvil. Finally, he begged his mother for the fragments of Gram, and when Regin forged a new sword from the pieces, flames ran along its edges and it split the anvil asunder!

Sigurd dug pits into the path along which Fafnir walked and hid in one. When the dragon walked over him, he plunged Gram into its heart and killed it. He then cut out the dragon's heart and, at Regin's request, roasted it on a spit. As it cooked, he touched it and then licked the blood from his finger. Immediately, he could hear the birds talking in the trees, warning him that Regin was treacherous and would betray him and kill him. Advised by the birds, Sigurd cut off Regin's head, loaded the gold on Grani's back and set off to Hindfell to seek a beautiful Valkyrie maiden called Sigrdrifa (sometimes known as Brynhild).

In a castle at Hindfell, Brynhild lay asleep but fully clad in armour. She was one of Odin's 'choosers of the slain' and had reversed Odin's decision in one battle, killing the wrong warrior. In vengeance, Odin had struck her down with an eternal sleep, but Sigurd cut through her armour with Gram and awakened her. Before he left, they both pledged their undying love and Sigurd gave her Andvari's gold ring. He promised that he would return and fetch her, but Brynhild (who possessed great wisdom and foresight) knew that an awful fate awaited Sigurd, and that both their lives would be filled with grief.

Sigurd asked Regin to make a sword to slay Fafnir. The smith made three swords, but Sigurd smashed each one on the anvil. Finally, he begged his mother for the fragments of Gram, and when Regin forged a new sword from the pieces, flames ran along its edges and it split the anvil asunder!

Sigurd went to the hall of King Giuki who had three sons, Gunnar, Hogni and Guttorm, and a daughter, Gudrun. The wife of Giuki, Grimhild, was a witch-wife and schemed that Sigurd should marry Gudrun. To this end, she gave him an enchanted drink which made him forget Brynhild and go on to marry her daughter. Sigurd also swore an oath of brotherhood with Gunnar, and even went with him on a quest to win Brynhild as Gunnar's wife. Knowing Sigurd's fate, Brynhild had surrounded her bower with a wall of flame which she knew only he could ride through. When Gunnar failed to ride through it, Sigurd changed likenesses with him and rode through the flames on Grani. He then (as Gunnar) claimed Brynhild for his wife, and stayed with her for three nights with his sword Gram laid blade upwards between them. Thinking that the man was Gunnar, Brynhild gave him Andvari's gold ring.

When the real Gunnar and Brynhild were married, Grimhild restored Sigurd's memory. He realised what he had done, but could do nothing about it because of the oath he had sworn with Gunnar. Brynhild remained convinced that it had been Gunnar himself who had claimed her until one day Sigurd's own wife Gudrun showed Brynhild Andvari's ring which was now of course in Sigurd's possession.

When Brynhild spoke to Sigurd about the deception, he admitted what had happened but reinforced his undying love for her. But Sigurd was still bound by his oath, and so Brynhild took the drastic step of beguiling Gunnar to break the oath by killing Sigurd — this being the only way in which she knew she could join her lover. It was Gunnar's brother Guttorm who stabbed Sigurd with a sword, but as he died, Sigurd cut Guttorm in half with Gram.

Brynhild then foretold the future for Gunnar, telling him that he and all his family would soon die. She asked him to build a huge burial mound on the plains for Sigurd and to lay with him all those he had slain. She asked that two men be laid at his head and two at his feet, that two hawks be killed and put in the mound, and that five of her own bonds-women and eight bondsmen should be buried there also. She then stabbed herself with her sword.

As she was dying, they laid out Sigurd's body as she had ordered on a funeral pyre, and Brynhild lay down beside him, placing his sword blade upwards between them. Thus, as the flames of the funeral pyre consumed them both, they became man and wife together in death.

There are several themes in this legend which can be looked at more closely. One is the role of the gods, especially that entertaining little chappie who seemed to appear everywhere. Many of the Norse gods liked to disguise themselves as humans and influence men's lives. This was especially true of Odin who (like Zeus in Greek Mythology) was forever altering the course of destiny himself. He was, after all, the eldest of the gods and the 'Allfather', holding sway over all things. He was the god of strife and battle, giving victory wherever he willed; he was the lord of the slain and master of the Valkyries. Odin himself was unpredictable, but he could foresee all things to come, even his own death. He had made heaven and earth and man himself, so he expected to interfere quite a bit too!

In any Norse campaign, with the help of the **LEGENDS & LORE**™ Cyclopaedia or a book of Norse myths, DMs should be able to introduce a few NPCs who are gods in disguise, perhaps to help play along, delay the characters, give them some information etc. When Odin appears in Volsung's hall, on the battlefield and at the choosing of Grani, he is described as having only one eye. This is the feature which marks him out; when he wished to obtain all the wisdom of the world by drinking from Mimir's well, he sacrificed his other eye by plucking it out and throwing it in the well. The players in a Norse campaign might be helped to 'see through' a god's disguise by recognising certain symbols or attributes — Thor's hammer or goat-drawn chariot, Tyr's missing hand, etc.

Using gods 'anonymously' allows a DM to exert influence (magical or otherwise) on a campaign without the need for massive overkill which all-too-often results when gods show up in full glory.

Another theme which recurs again and again in the story is that of shape-changing or skin-changing. Sometimes

men change at will into other creatures, for example Fafnir, Otter and Andvari. Others need to dress in a creature's skin to become that creature as in the tale of Sigmund and Sinfjotli. Men sometimes changed places, taking on each other's likeness, for example Sigurd and Gunnar or Signy and the witch-wife.

The **D&D®** game is, of course, full of shape-changers (lycanthropes, doppelgangers, druids and magical polymorphs), but it is still possible to ring the changes. The use of magical skins which allow characters to assume the forms of specific animals is one possibility, and gives the DM more control than when using **polymorph** potions. Characters might be required to go out and acquire skins from real animals (rare, difficult or dangerous to catch, or found only in particular places) in order that these can be converted (by an NPC — at a price) for skin-changing use. What about a doppelganger variant which does not just imitate a person but actually forces him to swap with another body (or offers him one)? Having people 'changing skin' to suit their personality, like Fafnir, is more tricky, but a temporary change (divinely caused) into an appropriate animal might be a good punishment for a character changing alignment. Even a partial change might do — imagine an over-greedy paladin with a temporary swine-face!

The idea of the *berserkir* (bear-shirts) and *ulfhednar* (wolf-pelted) warriors in the Viking world reflects that of shape-changing in the legends (see also **MAGIC & MAYHEM** in this issue, and, for those who can get hold of a copy, **DRAGON™** magazine #3). The berserker's battle frenzy and howling must have been very much like the state which Sigmund and Sinfjotli got into when they donned the wolf-skins. Indeed, in one version of the tale, Sigmund savagely bit open his son's throat in his frenzy.

The horse was an animal of great importance in the Viking world and this is echoed in the powers attributed to Grani in the Volsung saga. He could ride fearless through flames and even carry the whole of Andvari's gold hoard on his back (a feat which the legend says several ordinary horses could not do). We often imagine that all Viking warriors were foot soldiers — a lot of them were — but many were also horse warriors who set great store by their steeds. Viking horses were small by modern standards (light war horse range) and did not have barding. Some were buried in their riders' graves with their harness, bit, bridle, etc. Saddles were made of wood and leather and were placed fairly far forward on the horse so that the rider's legs stretched out in front of the saddle not down by the side. Stirrups were only introduced into Europe in the Viking period and are often found in men's graves along with spurs. Any character who plays a fairly wealthy warrior character in a Norse campaign should certainly consider kitting himself out with a horse of this kind.

In the Volsung saga, we are twice introduced to the idea of burial and what happens to the dead to prepare them for the afterlife. The first instance is only an oblique reference, when king Siggeir entombed Sigmund and Sinfjotli in a burial mound. The second is the funeral of Sigurd when Brynhild gave instructions to Gunnar about the funeral rites and to erect a magnificent barrow over the grave. We are very fortunate in having references like these and also information from archaeology to tell us about Viking funeral rites. We know that throughout the Viking world, both men and women were buried with their weapons, tools, jewellery, animals and even their ships and carriages if they were wealthy enough. Bodies (and the ships, weapons etc) were either inhumed, or cremated on a pyre first before they were buried. Sometimes, some of the objects were ritually 'killed', ie destroyed. For example, swords were often bent in two.

Although there are some Viking cemeteries with flat graves, most Viking burials were surmounted by a large mound; the more impressive the mound, the better you might be remembered.

It was a tradition in some Viking areas that members of the dead man's retinue would be ritually killed so that they could be buried with him and be with him in the afterlife, (cf sutteeism). Most of the time, the victims were slaves and chose to die with their lords. In the Volsung story, both Signy and Brynhild were willing to sacrifice themselves. In 922AD, an Arab traveller called Ibn Fadlan witnessed the burial ceremony of a rich man among the Rus (probably Swedish Vikings who had settled along the Volga River) and recorded it. He told how one of the man's female slaves had volunteered to die with him. They had hauled his ship overland from the river and had set it in the ground, surrounded by a funeral pyre. They placed a richly-covered bier in the ship, laid the man out on it and erected a tent over it. They killed horses and cattle and put them in the ship with all sorts of other food. They gave strong drink to the girl to intoxicate her before she was taken into the tent and ritually stabbed and strangled to death by a woman who was called the 'Angel of Death'. They then laid her by the side of her master and set fire to the ship. On the place where the ship had stood, they raised a huge burial mound.

In a campaign, characters are quite used to dealing with the living and, all too often, with the dead (or not quite dead). Incorporating a Viking funeral into a campaign gives various opportunities for introducing players to the meeting place of the two (a meeting place potentially full

continued on page 40

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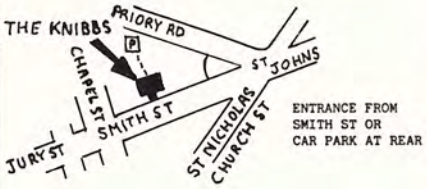

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PELINORE: the City League

THE ASYLUM
by Brian Garrod

The Asylum, stark and grey, looks more like a fortress than a medical institution, with its thick walls and fortified gate-house. There are two classes of patients here: those who can pay and those who can't. The latter have to work to pay their fees, usually sewing or carving ornaments in the workroom but occasionally as cook or caretaker. Sometimes the courts order certain individuals to attend the Asylum for various periods — from a few hours to several years. The Asylum employs guards to ensure the 'safety' of such unfortunates and, sometimes, to restrain raving patients. Mandren (**27a**) is such a case.

On rare occasions a patient will escape; sometimes they get as far as the Cock O' Th' Walk (**14**) or Monument Square (**36-45**), but rarely further. It may, however, take the guards several hours to locate the escapee....

THE STAFF

46a **Thrandor Lox:** F; C6; L/LG; mace in room; AC 6; hp 25/35

H
S 16 ☐ *Usually dressed in white tunic and skirt; black hair shorn short;* ***bracers of defence AC6***
I 8
W 17 ☐ *Asylum warden and head analyst/surgeon*
D 9 ☐ *Serene and always appears calm; sharp tongued but caring; ruthlessly upholds lawfulness*
C 15
Ch 15 ☐ *Wife of Dornass (**46b**); knows everyone locally and within the Asylum; professional goodwill with the Cock O' Th' Walk staff; special friend of Amandaia (**3a**)*

46b **Dornass Lox:** M; Fr5; L/LG; swordstick; AC 6/7; hp 12/16

H
S 9 ☐ *Dresses in a leather tunic and grey breeches; neat beard; felt hat contains writing quills amongst gaudy feathers*
I 14
W 7 ☐ *Asylum warden and office manager*
D 15 ☐ *Contrasts with his wife – somewhat disorganised; hurried, harried and permanently behind with his tasks; helpful but rarely has time to listen, appearing blunt and absent-minded*
C 9
Ch 14 ☐ *Husband to Thrandor (**46a**); knows everyone within the Asylum but has no time for any other friends or acquaintances*

46c&d **Arar Sonant** and **Nomancholis Ip A'ra Bin Nomancholis** (usually called 'Loony' Bin by his friends) are asylum healers (C3; AC 9/10; hp 11/13; staves in rooms). Arar is capable but sometimes careless and often carefree. Bin is a lazy, aloof laurel-rester.

46e-i **Anatol**, **Wampateak**, **Portia**, **Lorma** and **Nobro** are acolytes-cum-students (C1; AC 9/10; hp 4/5; staves in rooms). All seem desperate to get on in the world but unwilling to work their way there. They seem surprisingly unconcerned about the patients and overconcerned with themselves. Anatol sees himself as very important and a natural leader of men. Portia flirts unceasingly with Wadren (**29b**). Wampateak covets Arar's job and Nobro swears at the patients. Lorma is apparently the only caring one but her sweetness is just a facade. Pleasant bunch.

46j&k — see also Gragen and Lolden (**27b&c**) — **Aman ana-Ristorin** and **Skullsucker** are asylum guards (F3; AC 5; hp 18/19; longswords). Both are funloving spendthrifts but basically honest. They are inseparable friends.

THE PATIENTS

46l **Equion:** M; Fr2; N but insane; no weapon; AC 9/10; hp 4/5

H
S 11 ☐ *Dressed in patchy, flea-ridden furs; hair matted and tangled, tied in a topknot; unshaven; grimaces and snarls*
I 15
W 8 ☐ *Asylum patient*
D 12 ☐ *A lunatic – convinced he is a lycanthrope – probably a werewolf; escapes regularly, especially on full-moons, and jumps out, snarling and grimacing, at passers by*
C 15
Ch 12 ☐ *Refuses to speak to anyone*

46m **Baldo the Beast:** M; Dw5/F5; L/LN but insane; **cursed beserking bastard sword**; AC 1/0; hp 26/27

Dw
S 17 ☐ *Wears rusted platemail; bright eyes;* ***ring of contrariness***
I 13 ☐ *Patient at the Asylum*
W 9 ☐ *Baldo is a troublesome patient, he has two conflicting magical items – neither will let the other be removed; at present the entire asylum is fed up with him and all are plotting to dupe him into letting Thrandor near enough to cast* ***remove curse****; occasionally Baldo goes on midnight 'orc hunts' around the neighbourhood*
D 17
C 13
Ch 9 ☐ *No friends!!*

46n **Sara Halftoe:** F; Fr1; L/LG but insane; no weapon; AC 7; hp 3/5

½
S 8 ☐ *Brown and yellow gown, apron; innocent, friendly manner; sweet and childlike.*
I 14
W 10 ☐ *Asylum patient and trustee cook*
D 17 ☐ *Sara is a sad case, a kleptomaniac – stealing anything and everything that is available; remorseful, sad and innocent; frightened of her affliction; wonderful cook.*
C 11
Ch 16 ☐ *Very popular with everyone in the Asylum as long as she keeps her fingers to herself*

46o **Daraphelia (& Natasha):** F; MU4; L/LG; no weapon; AC 9/10; hp 9

H
S 10 ☐ *Talks to her 'invisible familiar' – a cat called Natasha; carries her 'wand' (**wand of paralysation**) which no one will believe will work; it does work but, being lawful, Daraphelia will not use it to escape*
I 17
W 8
D 14
C 14 ☐ *Magician and falsely accused lunatic*
Ch 11 ☐ *Daraphelia was sent here by a court who found her drunk in a gutter; she is, however, quite sane and tired of her week-long stay in the Asylum; the guards do not let her out and Thrandor has confiscated her weapons, spellbook and spell components; no one believes she is sane; Natasha is indeed an invisible cat*
☐ *Has friends in the Magicians Guild and needs them!*

46p-y are patients suffering from various mental diseases (NM/F0 or Fr1 to 2; AC 9/10; hp 5 to 9); these rarely escape to terrorise t'League.

46z **'Oi':** M; T1; N/NE; no weapon; AC 6; hp 4

H
S 8 ☐ *Dirty, unkempt, smelly*
I 9 ☐ *Petty pickpocket and poking-stick salesboy*
W 5 ☐ *Noisy, aggressive, pushy little brat; demonstrates the effectiveness of his poking-sticks by poking passers-by, then offers to sell them as lunatic goads*
D 18
C 11
Ch 5 ☐ *Stole the idea from Tiblin ana-Ristorin (**15f**) at the N Docklands Court; the Thieves' Guild frequently send someone down to run him off, but he always returns*

THE DEATHCART
by Brian Garrod

The slow, steady beat of a drum heralds the approach of a deathcart — a common enough sight in rural Cerwyn with its black-draped coffin, solemn-faced chaperones, escort of clerics, and, on occasion, the professional weepers of the faith of Onjura. People avoid death-carts — death means disease and disease means death. Also, if you've even the slightest respect for or fear of the gods, you do not interfere with the remains of their departed followers.

This deathcart seems different somehow; it can't be the stoney-faced cleric of Onjura, nor the weeping, veiled widow, nor the weary guard nodding in his saddle — perhaps it's the smell of gold, that distinctive, alluring aroma, that makes this particular procession seem strange....

A few months ago Tomlin and his merry bunch of adventurers were down at heel. It wasn't that their adventures were unsuccessful or lacking in bountiful, beautiful booty; it was because bandits 'liberated' it, tollkeepers 'cough, er, accepted a few coppers consideration' or thieves 'borrowed' it on the way home. What was needed was a disguise. Perhaps by disguising themselves as the entourage of a newly-departed citizen and by hiding the treasure in the coffin, they could avoid their distinct loss of profit margin.

Tomlin and company can often now be seen returning home to Tellhalter, sometimes a saddle is empty, sometimes there is a new face, but usually the deathcart comes and goes unhindered.

Plotlines

1. The problem with Tomlin is that he never knows when to stop lying. Bluffing his way past the guards on the gates of the City League, and avoiding the bandits on the roads of Cerwyn was one thing, but Tomlin has now convinced quite a few people around the City that he is genuinely a High Cleric of the Faith of Onjura. The latest dodge then is to act as the Deathcart for important people when they pass on; and to divert the better fixtures and fittings of coffin and funeral trappings into party funds. And there comes a time when he does this once too often....

This idea will work best if Tomlin and the others are introduced to the PCs through a third party like Mylites Ep-Stein (**2a**), and if the two parties mingle a bit; Offar and Duffas would not be above signing on for single adventures with another group, and Tomlin might help the PCs start up a similar Deathcart dodge of their own.

When the scheme falls foul after the 'funeral' of a powerful City League notable, both parties will find themselves the centre of much unwelcome attention; vengeful relatives of the many deceased Tomlin has cheated, hired assassins, the full majesty of the Law.... The greedier the PCs have been in adopting Tomlin's ideas, the more they will be at risk, and their possessions — and their very lives — will be at risk as they flee the City until the heat dies down.

47a

Tomlin (aka The Darra of Jarne, Nolik the Undertaker): M; T8; N/CN; **longsword** +1; AC 2/3; hp 23/30

H
S 8
I 15
W 9
D 18
C 7
Ch 14

- ☐ *Weedy, pallid complexion, lank hair, face a mass of scars; wears conventional robe and skullcap of a cleric of Onjura; **bracers of defence AC 6**; rides next to the driver on the cart*
- ☐ *Adventurer and would-be undertaker*
- ☐ *Fast talker, sly, deceitful and thoroughly lovable; a charmer, suave; physically weakened by ogres who decided to torture and maim their captive; worshipper of Hrea, the grey liar*
- ☐ *Knows Sheer Dreeve (**35a**), but after a misunderstanding avoids The Walk; knows Jarda Whitehand (**CT3a**) and avoids him also, for similar reasons; friendly with the leader of the Patricians (**CT6**); knows most Tellhalter women by sight (at least).*

47b

Jo-Lise Soarem: F; C6/D6; N
hammer +1; AC 6/5; hp 20/27

H
S 9
I 9
W 17
D 15
C 13
Ch 15

- ☐ *Dressed as the widow in a long, black, lacy gown and veil; black, hooded cape; **ring of protection** +3; dusky with sun-bleached hair even in winter; snub-nosed; rides on a pony beside the cart*
- ☐ *Priestess of Tarmenel, the sky/weather god*
- ☐ *Doesn't really approve of the disguise which she sees as effeminate; plays with other's emotions – particularly Offar's, who loves her but is afraid to show it too much; and Tomlin's, who enjoys her flirtatiousness; loves birds especially*
- ☐ *Religious contacts in most Cerwyn towns and T'League*

47c

Offar the Blond: M; F5/R5; L/LG;
bastard sword +3, **longbow** +1; AC 0; hp 35/40

H
S 18[45]
I 14
W 15
D 11
C 15
Ch 8

- ☐ *plate mail, **shield** +2, yellow hair tied in topknot; stern expression; poses as the company's bodyguard – rides quietly, head down, at the rear*
- ☐ *Adventurer*
- ☐ *Never lies and hates the dissembler gods and their people; stays with the party only to ensure Jo-Lise's safety; antagonistic towards Tomlin, whom he believes to be stealing Jo-Lise from him; resolute, longsuffering, boring, loyal, oversentimental and romantic*
- ☐ *Loves Jo-Lise; few other friends*

47d

Imp Kornia Gemlight: M; Dw6/F6; L/LN
battleaxe +2; AC 0; hp 33/52

Dw
S 14
I 10
W 7
D 16
C 17
Ch 6

- ☐ ***chainmail** +2 under rags, shield, conical helmet; pristine 3' beard; sharp eyes; rides to the fore beating the warning drum*
- ☐ *Adventurer and sometime gladiator*
- ☐ *Depraved, perverted and disgusting at his best; deadpan, arrogant and rude to all; heart of gold and loves children of all races; extremely generous and jolly when drunk (if you can ever call a dwarf generous – they all have their limits!)*
- ☐ *Knows the Karrysons (**64a&b**) and many other dwarves; rarely calls any non-dwarf a friend – if he does, it's a lie*

47e

Duffas: M; Mu4/I4; N;
dagger +2; AC 5; hp 13

H/G
S 8
I 15
W 14
D 18
C 13
Ch 13

- ☐ ***ring of protection** +1 and several other cheap rings; short, thin and watery complexion; sandy hair; dresses as a carter in brown smock and breeches*
- ☐ *Adventurer cum prankster*
- ☐ *Practical joker, fun loving, sometimes utterly lunatic with bad taste in humour and clothes; loves gambling and cheating; prefers cantrips to any low level spell*
- ☐ *Knows Malachite Burwright (**9a**) but keeps it quiet; friendly with the Evenings (**9h&i**); often plays tricks on Mylitis Ep-Stein (**2a**) whom he has disliked from a child.*

Spellbook:
D&D 1: (2, 5*, 8, 9, 12*)
2: (2, 3*, 7, 9*, 11, 12)
AD&D 0: (usually any 12)
1: (1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12)
2: (1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12)

The WAXWORKS by Linda Moore

A new waxworks has opened in the League in a rather upmarket part of the Borough not far from the ruins of the old city walls. As a public entertainment the waxworks are quite popular since this craft is unusual in the area and the figures on show are remarkably lifelike.

In actuality, the proprietor of the place is a somewhat lazy vampire by the name of Lorys. Rather than go out and take the blood of sleeping people, he has quietly built up a private store of captured thieves and beggars (and one or two more interesting characters) who won't be missed — or so he thought. These are the 'waxworks' — real people paralysed, painted with a wax paint and dressed up for display. He takes blood from one every night in a rota so the loss of blood never kills them and the paralysing fluid regularly given to them is fortified to keep them alive.

During the day the building is opened to the public who are charged 1gp each to look around. It is guarded day and night by two young chaotic-lazies called Bolx and Mrija. They know nothing of Lorys' real identity and do not ask as they are allowed to keep half of the take at the door. They aren't actually as good at guarding the place as they might be and often abandon it in the evening to visit the local hostelries. They sleep in the shelter of the eves and are not allowed in the building during the hours of darkness

Lorys uses the waxworks as a base — merely for bed and breakfast. During daylight he rests in the cool and damp of his coffin in the basement. At night he takes the form of a bat and roams the City — taking in the sights and sounds of the teeming metropolis, hearing and seeing things thought secret by those who have secrets to keep.

DM's notes

The layout of the waxworks is quite straightforward. It is a two storey, detached building. There is a small lobby in which entrance money is collected — kept in leather purses around the belts of the guards — leading into a large room in which are the 'waxworks'. These waxworks are astonishingly lifelike and will raise the suspicions of intelligent characters. The guards are vigilant, however, and overt attempts to touch (or pick bits off) the exhibits will be resisted. This is essential as the figures are warm to the touch! Beyond is a small storeroom with stairs leading down to a cellar. The nourishing drug that keeps the victims asleep and alive is stored here in large quantities as are the various props, paints and real waxworks needed to complete the tableaux upstairs. In the floor of the cellar is a secret trapdoor which leads to an undercellar in which is just one of the vampire's many coffins. A concealed door at one end of the cellar leads to a series of chambers, which in turn link with the sewers that run beneath the Borough.

Lorys is cunning and dangerous, and has placed traps about the Waxworks. The most diabolical of these is a **mirror of life trapping** beneath the soil in his coffin; beneath that are gems worth 26,800gp.

49a Lorys — a vampire;

powers and abilities as the monster; **rod of dominion, ring of protection+4, ring of regeneration**

- ☐ *Clad all in black; pallid complexion with red corneas around piercing black irises; bright red lips and yellow teeth*
- ☐ *Vampire*
- ☐ *Evil in every fibre; he avoids killing victims in order to maintain his 'collection' and so attacks to overpower unless in fear of his life; always awakes within 1 round of his coffin being opened*
- ☐ *Unknown in this guise though he occasionally appears as a nobleman in surrounding villages*

49b Bolx; M; F6; C/CE;

longsword +2; AC 3; hp 42/50

H
S 16 ☐ *Goodlooking and well-built; crimson surplus hiding platemail*
I 7
W 8 ☐ *Myrmidon*
D 12 ☐ *Slow of thought therefore appears charming; nasty and cheap; winning smile*
C 16
Ch 15 ☐ *Well known in local hostelries; somewhat feared*

49c Mrija; M; F6; C/CE;

shortsword +3; AC 2; hp 36/44

H
S 16 ☐ *Long, brown, hooded cape over platemail; very dark compexion*
I 6
W 7 ☐ *Myrmidon*
D 15 ☐ *Superficially grumpy hiding a really unpleasant personality; loves torture*
C 15
Ch 13 ☐ *Not popular, even with his drinking 'friends'*

49d Nila Scapul; F; MU5; C/CN(E)

dagger +2; AC 9/10; hp 14

H/½E
S 15 ☐ *Unkempt; unclean; very pale and prematurely grey; rarely appears by day*
I 11
W 6 ☐ *Enchanter, but has lost her spellbooks and forgotten all her spells; now assists Lorys with the Waxworks*
D 9
C 11 ☐ *Quiet, frightened, morbid; superficially pitiful, but relishes death and the dead; always tries to please Lorys*
Ch 12 ☐ *Hides from Bolx (**49b**) and Mrija (**49c**); knows and is known by the Staff at the Asylum (**46**) as an ex-patient*

49e Frinette; M; MU9; N;

no weapon; AC 6/7; hp 30

H
S 11 ☐ *Dressed in normal wizard's garb; impressive rather than handsome; **ring of protection +2; wand of frost/cold***
I 17
W 13 ☐ *Wizard; currently waxwork in tableau entitled 'The Conjuration of Phhasz'*
D 14
C 11 ☐ *Honourable to the point of stupidity; superior; snob; supercilious; fastidious; contemptuous of all lower 'spellmongers'*
Ch 18 ☐ *Knows the staff at the Magic Users' School (**9**) but regards them as amateurs and inferiors; grudgingly respects reputation of the White Order, and Firna (**13c**); claims to be Grand Master of the (totally fictitious) Order of Mountain Mages*

Spells:
D&D 1: (1*, 2, 4, 5, 6*, 8, 9, 10, 11*)
2: (3, 4*, 5, 10*, 11*)
3: (1*, 2, 7, 9*, 11*, 12)
4: (1, 2*, 4, 8*, 11)
5: (1*, 5)

AD&D 1: (2, 3*, 4, 6, 12, 15, 16**, 19, 22, 23, 25*, 30)
2: (5, 6*, 8, 9, 12, 14, 17*, 21, 23*)
3: (3*, 4, 13, 14, 16*, 18*, 19, 21, 24)
4: (1, 2*, 17, 18*, 22)
5: (3*, 10, 14)

49f Lliarrial Oakleaf; F; E6/F6-MU6; N;

longsword +3; **longbow +2**; AC 0/-1; hp 23/26

E
S 15 ☐ *Blackened **chainmail +2** and red-brown autumnal camouflaged cloak; striking beautiful elf maiden, but hard and non-smiling*
I 17
W 13 ☐ *Myrmidon-Warlock; vampire hunter (failed); waxwork in woodland elf tableau*
D 18
C 12 ☐ *Superficially charming; grim; brutal; obsessed with personal crusade against vampirism and undead*
Ch 15 ☐ *Knows no-one in City League except Lorys (**49a**) – whom she wants to kill regardless of the consequences – and his staff.*

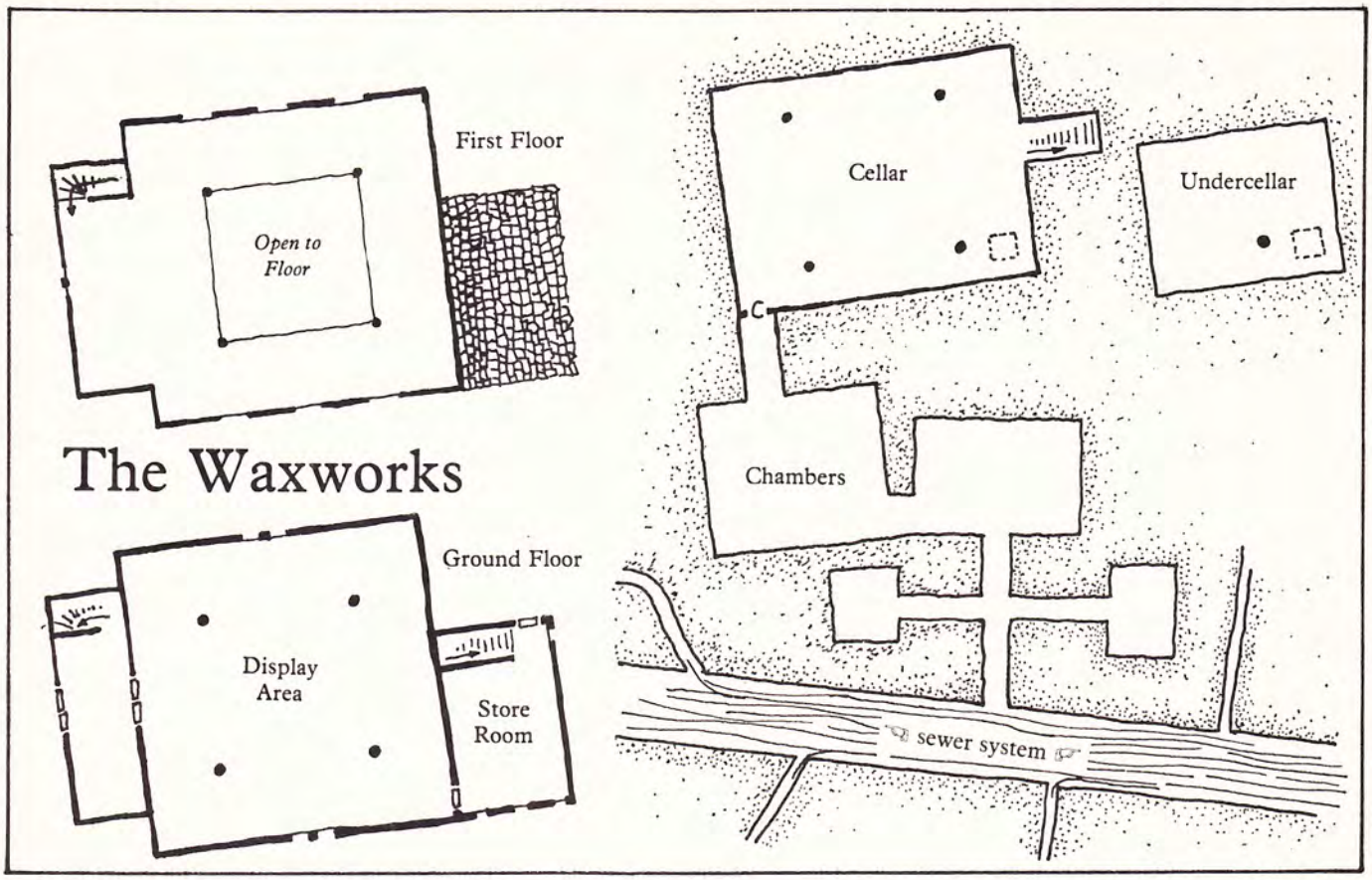
Spells:
D&D 1: (1*, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11*)
2: (6, 7*, 9, 11*)
3: (4*, 6, 9*)

AD&D 1: (3*, 12, 15*, 22, 23, 24*, 25*, 29)
2: (10, 12*, 15, 19, 23*)
3: (9*, 12, 16*)

49g Lagwort; M; F4; N/NE;

three daggers; AC 7/8; hp 24/30

H
S 15 ☐ *Stained black leathers and large, ill-fitting cloak; small and rat-faced*
I 10
W 7 ☐ *Bodysnatcher; waxwork in 'City By Night' tableau*
D 12 ☐ *Dishonest, slimy, repulsive; sees himself as a criminal mastermind; suffers from flatulence*
C 17
Ch 7 ☐ *Partner of Big Dunold (**49h**); knew Lorys as recipient of not-quite-dead bodies and Aethelron Verthill (**21b**) as a supplier of corpses.*



49h **Big Dunold;** M; T5/A5; N/NE; knobbed stick; AC 9/10; hp 35/40

H
S 18
I 4
W 3
D 4
C 18
Ch 4

☐ *Smart grey leathers and red cavalry boots; very big; left hand disfigured*
☐ *Bodysnatcher and wanted murderer; waxwork in 'City By Night' tableau*
☐ *Very, very stupid; violent; says little; virtually insane with fear – a child gouged his left hand with a knife and he is sure he will be in agony when he 'wakes up'*
☐ *Lagwort (**49a**) is his partner; the Punctillan and several District Militia would dearly love to meet him again....*

49b **Jisse;** F; T2; N; dagger; AC 7/8; hp 7/9

H
S 9
I 11
W 14
D 15
C 14
Ch 12

☐ *Low-cut, tight dress; hard-looking*
☐ *Hoyden and pickpocket; waxwork in 'Strangler' tableau*
☐ *Streetwise; hardened professional*
☐ *Nodding acquaintance with staff in most cheap taprooms in Docklands; estranged half-sister of Flinn (**61b**); member of Sisterhood of Hoydens*

49j **Falla Nithoen;** M; Fr4; L/LN; no weapon; AC 9/10; hp 10

H/½
S 16
I 9
W 8
D 10
C 13
Ch 14

☐ *Deep green doublet and hose; noose around neck*
☐ *Borough (District) Militiaman; waxwork of murderer about to be hanged*
☐ *Headstrong bungler; always knows better; overweeningly proud of Militiaman status*
☐ *Knows most of the Borough (District) Militimen by sight*

49k-v There are twelve others in the display. **Colster, Briddn** and **'Mast-Head Torry'** are beggars; **Lura** and **Pollnia** are street-girls; **Caf, Melurian** and **'Clipper'** are the off-spring of out-of-towners who strayed off while their parents were involved in their various businesses — all are Fr1, hp 2. **Thurpis** (Fr2, hp 5) is a shopkeeper's son; **Mardrevvir di Bartennia** (Fr3, hp 8) is a scribe-assistant to the Deputy Ambassador from Dontaldor to the Court of the Katar; **Bosjna** (T1, hp 1) is the apprentice-trainee to a locksmith; **'Lucky' Lessandra** (Fr 2, hp 5) is a tavern gambler. No-one is actively searching for these people, although the Ambassador from Dontaldor might pay 25gp as a reward for saving his compatriot.

The displays at the Waxworks change regularly as Lorys slowly drains his way through the bodies. New tableaux are set up from the victims that Lorys finds during his nocturnal expeditions. The drained bodies are taken down into a cellar and used to feed Lorys' pets — a disgusting collection of stirges, ghouls and giant bats. These creatures also range into the ancient sewer system that extends throughout the Borough.

Plotlines

1. An NPC known to the player characters comes to them; complaining bitterly about having seen a relative in one of the Waxworks tableaux — although she disappeared months ago. The poor wretch was beaten up by Lorys' henchmen when he tried to touch the figure. By the time the adventurers get there, the tableau in which the figure stood has been replaced, and Lorys' assistants will not be very forthcoming about the fate of the 'wax' figure. Making a fuss will just fetch the District Militia. The PCs' only chance is to try and slip in at night, when everyone is *bound* to be asleep....

2. Frinette was paralysed while saying the command words for his wand, so when re-animated he will be heard to say '....uichi' — and then the wand will go off. He will not be particularly apologetic, insisting that the Order of Mountain Mages will protect him from retribution.

3. Releasing Lagwort and Big Dunold, along with the other victims, will be an act of the great compassion — but the PCs will live to regret it. Lagwort is bright enough to recognise adventuring characters for what they are, and he knows adventurers are *always* loaded. He and Big Dunold will look for ways to divert the characters' possessions into their own care. And then there will be the matter of the Law. Releasing the victims is bound to make the adventurers famous in the Borough for a few days — so when Lagwort and Big Dunold start up their normal activities again, the District Militia and the Punctillan will be after them. Charged with three murders and six robberies, with plenty of previous convictions, Lagwort knows a guilty verdict will mean the death penalty, and so he will 'shop' the PCs in the hope that they will hire a big-time lawyer to get everyone off the hook.

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ICELANDERS

by Venetia Lee
and Reif Dormann

References: ***Njal's Saga, Laxdaela Saga*** *and others; translated by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Palsson; published by Penguin Books.*

The Iceland of the Norsemen makes a rewarding, if unusual, setting for role-playing games. There are no kings and no cities — just lonely farms around the coast and a wild, dangerous interior. Although farmers, the Icelanders were not simple rustics, but a proud and dangerous people. From their literature come many of the stories of the Norse gods (the Elder and Younger Eddas) — Trolls and Giants were said to dwell in the mountains, making it, in all, a suitable background for a Norse campaign. It is not within the scope of this article to give more than the flavour of the Icelandic setting — added detail can be obtained from their own writings, particularly the sagas.

Iceland was settled shortly after the unification of Norway under one king by noblemen who left wealth and lands rather than bow to him. It was a forbidding but promising land offering a fertile coast, despite an inhospitable, volcanic interior. The summers were good but short, and the winters cold, dark and very long.

Icelandic society was divided broadly into three categories: the Jarls, or noblemen; the Karls, freehold farmers; and the thralls, or slaves. According to tradition these marked very different kinds of people who 'belonged' in these positions. In practice they were aware that slavery often came from accidents of fortune. Slaves in Iceland had better treatment than elsewhere at the time and also basic legal rights. Anyone who showed ability — especially if they gained the favour of the powerful — was advanced. In the sagas, thralls frequently demand free status for performing some dangerous act or gain it by bravery. Similarly, Karl families who became wealthy and respected would be counted among the nobles.

Women's status would appear to have been high, although they had a different set of rights and obligations. Young girls, like young men, were subject to their fathers' wishes. However, the sagas are full of occasions on which great trouble comes after a woman is married against her will. They could own property. Some owned much and were correspondingly influential. In general, although they appear in the sagas as initiators of action rather than as doers, female characters can be given equal status in a campaign with much less adjustment than would be necessary in most other societies. Some used their influence wisely, others with malice. They may have been more careful of family honour than the men and shamed them into honourable behaviour. But they may also have been quarrelsome and persuaded men into unwise action against each other. Bergthora of Bergthorsknoll and her enemy, Hallgerd, prosecuted a killing match which ended in seven deaths, but not their own.

There were female sorcerers, but no warriors or priests — although some women could and did fight well, since when their men were away, they were left in charge of their lands. If you need justification for altering this society — to give female characters a wider choice of roles — it may be found in the argument that the availability of healing spells reduces infant mortality and allows some women to take more risks.

Icelandic farms were large communities, comprising family members, friends, hirelings and thralls. They grew corn and hay, and kept sheep, cattle and much prized horses. Wealth was reckoned in land, beasts, silver, fine cloth (for clothing and house furnishings) and ships. Ships were very valuable, since timber was in short supply and foreign trade important for that and other commodities. For leisure they had a number of athletic sports, spectacles such as horse fighting and, in the dark winters, storytelling.

A household might go months without seeing more than their nearest neighbours. However, once a year an assembly, the *Althing*, was held — to which all came who could. This was a great social occasion where important business could be conducted, including marriage alliances, trading partnerships and court cases. In addition, affairs affecting everyone could be settled (for example, the decision to accept Christianity over the whole island was taken at the *Althing* — the sporadic acceptance by some was causing bad feeling).

Despite their love of independence, they had to cooperate to survive the trials of the environment and to resist foreign domination. The custom of hospitality was a valued and seldom breached tradition — a stranger was not to be turned away from the door, nor should a neighbour be refused a loan of food if it was there to be given. In practical terms, no-one knew when they might be in the same position themselves, forced to seek shelter from bad weather or running out of grain in a hard winter. They were loyal friends — particularly to those who gave them aid. However, the family was paramount; what was in the interest of one was in the interest of all.

Although they allowed no rulers, they did acknowledge leaders; these were the *godis* or priest-chieftains. This position was hereditary, insofar as it ran in families, and depended on wealth and influence. However, their authority was limited by the number of followers they had — people did not follow a *godi* they did not respect.

Icelandic religion, as may be inferred from their literature, differs somewhat from that given in the **LEGENDS & LORE Cyclopedia** under 'Norse'. First, they did not conceive of Odin as 'supreme god'. In the younger Edda, Thor, Odin and Frey name themselves as Highest, Most High and Third — each powerful in their own spheres. The Icelanders' own preference was for Thor — the warriors' and farmers' god. Secondly, Loki, Thor's friend and Odin's foster brother, does not appear as wholly evil. He frequently gets the Aesir out of trouble with his courage and resourcefulness (even if it is usually trouble of his own making). In the Elder Edda poem 'Loki's Flyting' he insults many of the gods by exploiting their many faults. Odin comes off particularly badly — appearing treacherous and rather cowardly (but then Odin, elsewhere in the myths, appears in a bad light). Thor is the only one who bears up well under Loki's insults — Loki is afraid of the threat of Mjollnir and takes to his heels. If Loki is on the wrong side at Ragnarok, it is Odin's treachery in breaking treaties with the Giants that brings about the final battle.

They cannot avert this, as it is predetermined by Fate. Thus, wherever Loki's sympathies lie, he is doomed to betray the Aesir, just as it is Odin's Fate to cause the final breach.

The idea of Fate or Wyrd was central to the Icelandic view of the universe. The *Norns* determined what was to be and it could not be escaped, only postponed. The only way to exercise free will was to go to meet one's doom nobly — if the honourable course led to death, then that was still the one to take. In the saga bearing his name, Njal has foreseen his death by burning, but when his household is threatened by attack he chooses to defend his house from within despite the warnings of his son, Skarp-Hedin, that it might be set on fire. Skarp-Hedin, in agreeing to this plan, says that he is not sure it is for the best "for he (Njal) is a doomed man now, but still I do not mind pleasing my father by burning in the house with him, for I am not afraid of dying." Njal dies calmly and his sons bravely — as they were fated to do.

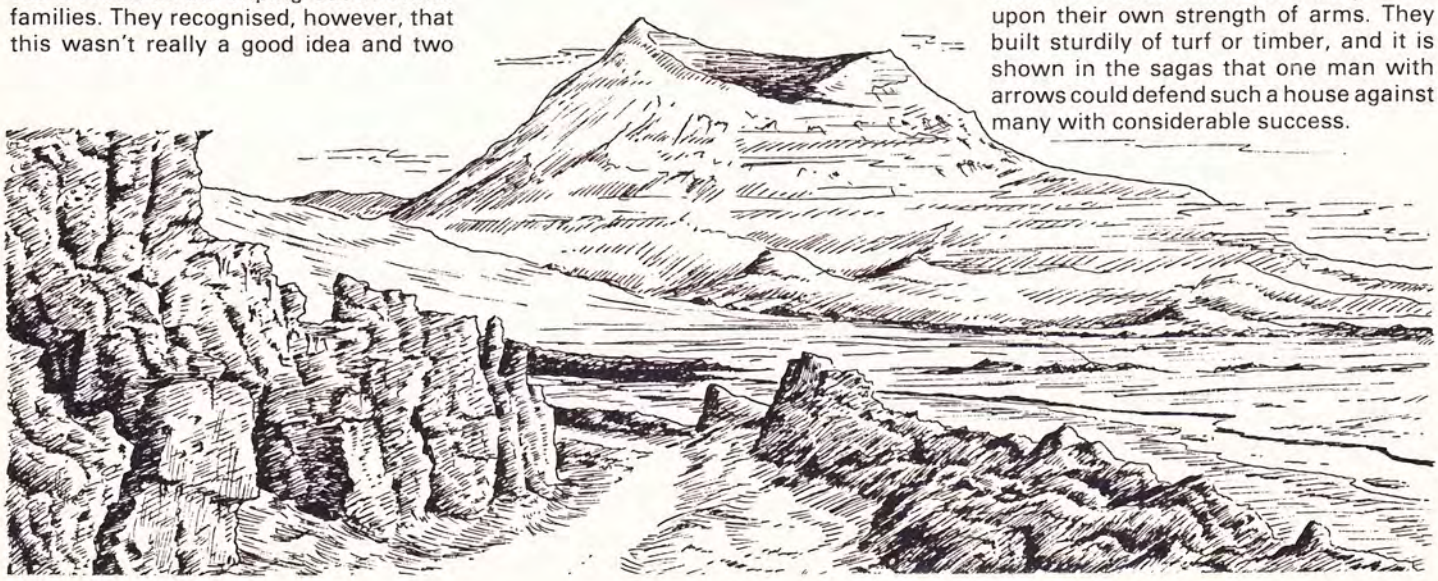
As well as their religious duties, *godis* were advisers in legal and other matters. The Icelanders were a quarrelsome lot and disputes over land, property, marital problems, etc, were frequent (one authority claims these were trivial matters, but I would maintain they were matters of life and death). At the core to all this was the sense of honour. Reputation was all-important to the Icelanders. The honourable man was hospitable, generous, fair-minded and brooked no insults from anyone — if necessary enforcing this by the sword. It might seem absurd to kill on account of trivial ridicule, but then no-one offered an insult, except to a person of no account, unless they were spoiling for a fight (or being very stupid). Fortunately, they were not generally quick with their swords, allowing time for tempers to cool and for apology and reparation to be made. Forbearance was considered a virtue. By old custom, any injury or offence had to be paid out in kind — if not by the victims then by their family. Often this led to escalation of conflict and people got killed. Once killing was involved, a string of tit-for-tat murders could result in the wiping out of entire families. They recognised, however, that this wasn't really a good idea and two things combined to work against against it — the slow pace at which feuds continued and the substitution of weregild for revenge killings.

The latter was the acceptance of monetary payments in lieu of revenge. To give an idea of the sums involved — forty-eight ells of cloth was worth one mark of silver; two marks bought one cow; the weregild for a slave was one and a half marks, that for a freeman twelve and a half, but for someone notable twice or even six times that. At this time, two hundred and fifty marks of silver was a considerable fortune. Using the livestock prices in the **Players' Handbook**, one mark is equivalent to five gold pieces (clearly these amounts will need adjusting in many campaigns). If a weregild settlement could be agreed by all parties concerned in front of witnesses, the matter need go no further. However, the issue was usually complicated by disagreement over mitigating circumstances and by the tendency of feuding to involve large bands of friends and followers in pitched battles (incidentally, it was not considered dishonourable to attack with greatly favourable odds if that was the way to win, although people would assume the victims to have been the better men). Where agreement could not be reached, the legal system was resorted to. This had been imported and adapted from Norway. I will not detail all the complications here, but certain aspects are important, especially if players get involved in feuds.

Icelandic law was concerned with arbitration between individuals or families. Where disputes could not be settled simply — by the people concerned (and advisers) — the case was taken to the *Althing*, which opened with a recitation of the law so that all could be familiar with it (although few in fact understood its ramifications). Cases were judged by the *godis* — with a jury whose function was not to reach a verdict, but to determine whether the correct procedures were being followed. The cornerstone of procedure was that everything had to be correctly witnessed, for example the declaration that someone had a case to answer or the summons of the guilty party. The courts had the power to order weregild payment or outlaw (exile) someone, permanently or temporarily. Outlawry was resorted to usually when someone put themselves outside the law by repeatedly breaking settlements or committing a particularly disgusting act. If the exile order was not complied with, the outlaw could be killed without legal redress. It was a serious matter to be forced into exile when status depended on land.

Typically, the proposed settlements took into account mitigating circumstances as well as balancing injuries given and received. Once a decision had been reached, it was up to the parties concerned to carry it out and, if this was done correctly, the matter was considered closed. In practice, the system worked well, but when it broke down the results could be spectacular. After the burning of Njal, the *godi* acting for the burners (a Iago-like figure who had stirred up the trouble in the first place) tried to destroy the case against them by legal trickery. Passions were high on both sides (a number of people would still rather take blood revenge) and the result was a pitched battle at the *Althing*. Civil war was averted by one man who forced a temporary halt to the battle and proposed a settlement, by weregild, which was agreeable to most concerned. Those who refused it, Njal's nephew and son-in-law, subsequently carried out a successful campaign of blood vengeance. The legal system depended on goodwill to work, but was not so rigid that it was not possible to make a solution outside the courts.

The Icelanders did not build large, stone fortifications. Indeed, they had no need for such, since there was no great quantity of portable wealth to protect nor were any large armies ever raised against them or amongst them. To defend themselves and their households they relied upon their own strength of arms. They built sturdily of turf or timber, and it is shown in the sagas that one man with arrows could defend such a house against many with considerable success.



Secrecy in public affairs was abhorred and in fact, hard to maintain. Neighbours tended to know each other's business and strangers attracted much attention. The most disgraceful act was to kill someone by stealth and then conceal the murder, failing to announce it before witnesses. A person who had done this was considered automatically outlawed and could be killed out of hand. Secret theft (as opposed to forcible seizure of goods of disputed ownership) was despised almost as much — the thief might actually be allowed to go into exile. These attitudes would make the running of Icelandic thief or assassin player characters rather difficult. They are, perhaps, best run as coming from different cultures or non-human races and without criminal tendencies. Some thief characters might exist among the Vikings themselves, acting as scouts.

Magic Users are portrayed in the sagas as sinister figures, using their power for evil. However, this may well be due to Christian influence. For rpgs, it is more useful to note that they were feared but respected by most people and tended to live apart in remote places. As an NPC, of course, the evil wizard is invaluable.

Fighters and clerics come into their own in an Icelandic campaign. They may achieve the highest status, not building great temples or castles, but as landowners and chieftains. The Priests will ultimately become *godis*. The existence of **raise dead** spells will cause problems. I would suggest that if a person is raised, they claim weregild at a rate as for serious injury and that where a person's death is positively intended (ie, they did not just 'get in the way') they would be rendered unraisable deliberately. Clerics might also be unwilling to cast the spell on anyone who has been killed in battle because they should not interfere with fate.

Another possibility for the single player and GM is to run a skald character; a bard much honoured by the Norse. The skalds acted as newstellers, entertainers and teachers of the young, and were often consulted in the same way as the *godis*.

There is great potential for adventure in an Icelandic campaign, either on its own or as an extension of a more general Viking campaign. Some features must be changed to fit in with standard frp games. Iceland, or the equivalent area, could be seeded with low-level nasties (and a few bigger ones in the deep interior) for low-level characters to cut their teeth on, whilst becoming involved in the endless rounds of politicking and feuding. Later, of course, the lure of foreign lands might be difficult to refuse.

The following are the available plots:

1. In the initial settlement phase there is land and glory to be won. The native horrors must be overcome and there may be previous settlers (the Norsemen had to contend with Irish monks, who were probably not mild churchmen). As well as these there will be considerable rivalry for the best land — at least after the Jarls have taken their share as the financers of the expedition.

2. The blood feuds have obvious potential. For a self-contained adventure the players could be involved on the periphery, by friendship or kinship to one or both sides. Marriage connections can be used to introduce all kinds of new complications. Eventually, they may be involved in a pitched battle, perhaps against their will. Finally the matter can be resolved by agreed payments.

Feuds were frequently revived after several years — usually by those who had been left out of any settlement. These might be brothers who had been away or women who had previously lacked a champion or, commonly, illegitimate sons of a dead man who had been discounted because of their youth, but grew up to be formidable men.

Finally, a feud could run continuously throughout a campaign. The killers of someone dear to the adventurers could flee, and subsequent adventures take place as they were hunted down. The longer it took to find them, the more they could have gained levels as the player characters do. To give added interest, their relatives or friends could then start to hunt the hunters....

Standard incidents in the sagas concern either the restraining of hotheads, who would kill when they are in the wrong, or the egging on of those reluctant to seek revenge, by impugning their honour. It should be noted that the tragedy of a blood feud lies not in the pitching of good against evil, but in the way that honour forces men who might otherwise be friends to kill each other.

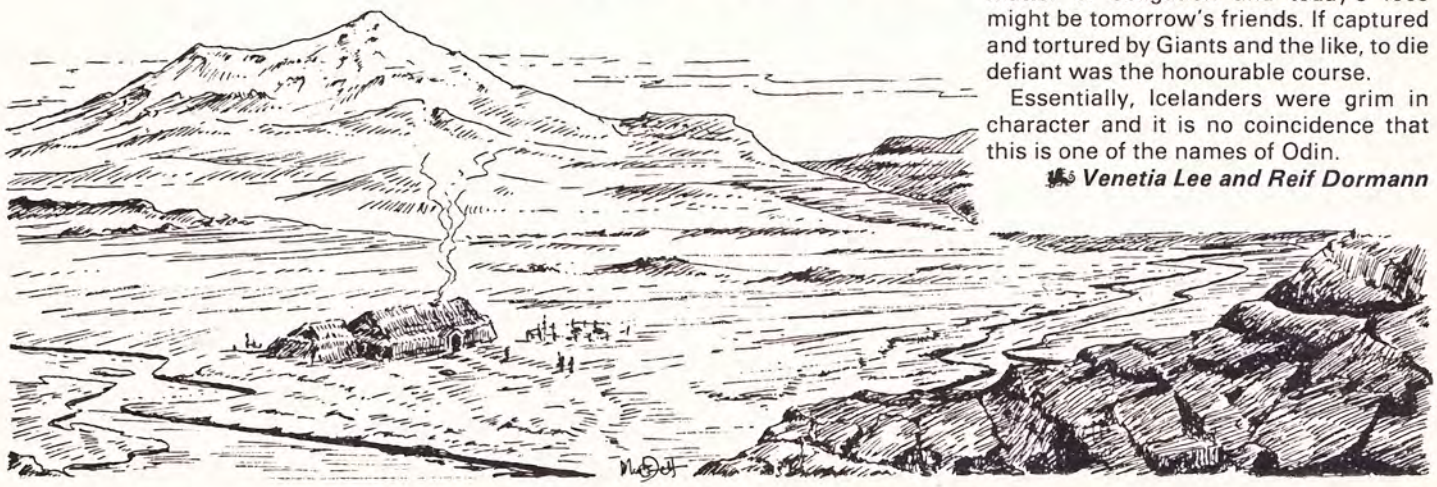
3. The Icelanders were great travellers, well aware of the potential of the outside world. Often it was impossible to gain enough wealth and influence at home to satisfy ambition. Those who could, equipped trading expeditions and others joined them. They went as far afield as Byzantium, as well as the famed expeditions to Greenland and America. Such ventures took a standard time of three years in saga and are unlikely to have been much less with the distances involved.

They made themselves at home with kings and cities, but the ultimate ambition of any Icelander was to bring his wealth home — to farm and raise a family. Only by doing this, by demonstrating prowess and wisdom at home, could he gain the reputation he really cared about — that among his own countrymen.

Reputation, for courage, fortitude and nobility of character is paramount to a Norse character. The news that a band of Giants were within reach would see a band of grim warriors assembling in the bright clothes they wore for killing. Fear of death could not overcome the twin spurs of Glory and Doom. However, there was no obligation to fight if hopelessly outclassed — unless a blood feud was involved, in which case it could only be postponed. Anyone who did not fight when obliged would be subjected to increasing slights on their honour, goading them to action — if only against their tormentors. Even those too young and inexperienced to do anything but wait would be constantly reminded of their obligation. They were not subtle in battle, aiming to kill; no prisoners could be taken or surrender accepted from giants, orcs, trollkin and the like. In contrast, human prisoners would be well-treated — if Icelanders, they would usually be freed without penalty, if Norse, ransomed (for an amount compatible with weregild) and allowed to keep a favoured (ie, magical) weapon, and if foreign, they would be taken into thralldom or ransomed for a larger sum. The favourable treatment meted out to their own was common sense — enmities were frequently a matter of obligation and today's foes might be tomorrow's friends. If captured and tortured by Giants and the like, to die defiant was the honourable course.

Essentially, Icelanders were grim in character and it is no coincidence that this is one of the names of Odin.

Venetia Lee and Reif Dormann



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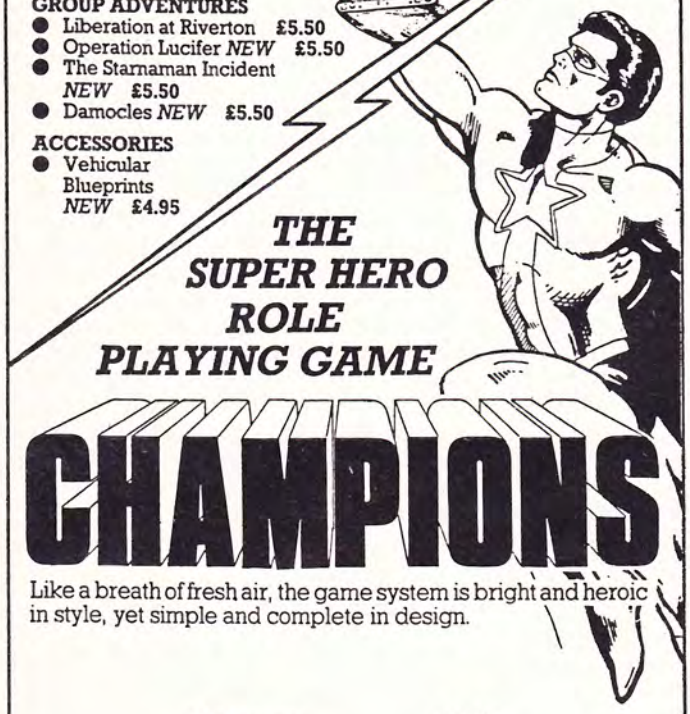

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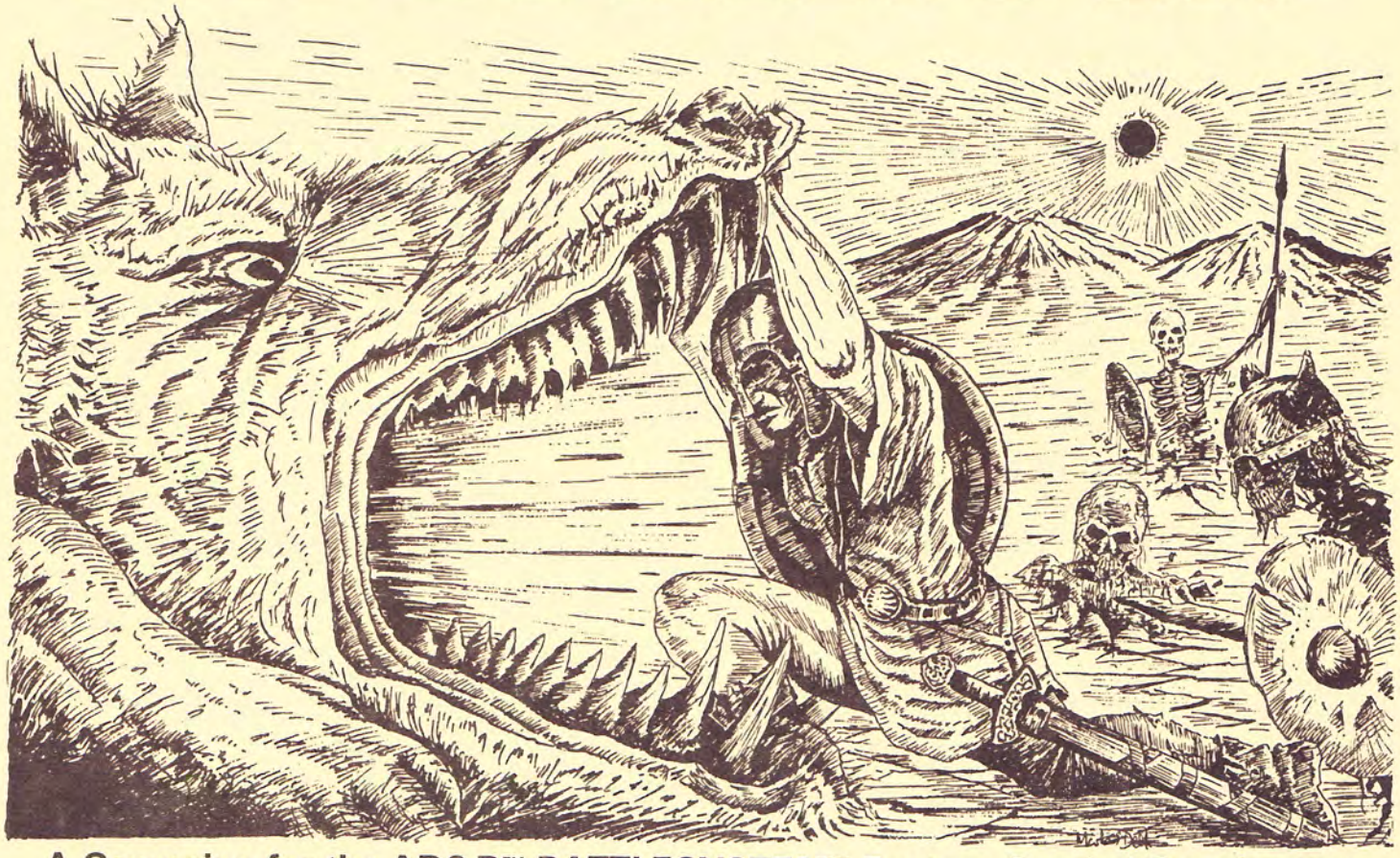
"An axe-age, a sword-age, shields will be gashed:
there will be a wind-age and a wolf-age before the world is wrecked."
The Norse Myths, Kevin Crossley-Holland

RAGNAROK!



A Campaign for the AD&D™ BATTLESYSTEM™ Fantasy Combat Supplement

by Chris Felton

To make use of this section of **IMAGINE**™ magazine you will need access to the **ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®** rules and a copy of the BATTLESYSTEM game.

Statistics are not given in standard BATTLESYSTEM format, but are provided on the various tables in this scenario so that the unit sheets can be filled out quickly and accurately.

INTRODUCTION

Ragnarok. The Time. The Twilight of the Gods. The Norse knew that the world was to end in a battle of such magnitude that the whole universe, all the Nine Worlds, would be laid waste and destroyed. On the plain of Vigrid, outside the walls of Asgard, the home of the Gods, the battle would be fought to its bitter end. The Giants and their kin, the dead and the evil would meet the forces of the Gods, Heroes from Valhalla, the chosen of the Valkyries.

Ragnarok is the last titanic act of a drama that begins long before, when the Nine Worlds are still happy.

Whether Ragnarok can be traced back to the falling out of the two clans of Norse gods, the Aesir and the Vanir, is debatable. With the torture (by the Aesir) of a Vanir emissary, and subsequent Aesir trickery, oaths and treaties lost their validity. Betrayals became more common than oaths in the worlds of men and Gods.

If Ragnarok has a single starting point it is with the death of Balder, fairest of the Gods, the son of Odin and Frigg. Balder was the beloved of everyone who saw him, gods and men alike. But even the love with which he was showered did not prevent Balder from suffering terrible dreams about his own death. However, Frigg extracted promises from everything, every creature, object, plant, even the very stones, that they would not harm Balder. Everything except one insignificant little plant, the misletoe, which was too young to hurt anyone....

Balder rejoiced in his new found safety, as did the other Aesir. Pebbles did not hurt him, neither did sticks, or logs, boulders, swords, axes or arrows. The Gods took to hurling things at Balder, rejoicing anew as they bounced off without harming him. Only two of the Gods did not enjoy the new sport, blind Hod, Balder's brother, who could not see the target, and Loki, the Trickster and mischief-maker, who was consumed by hatred and contempt.

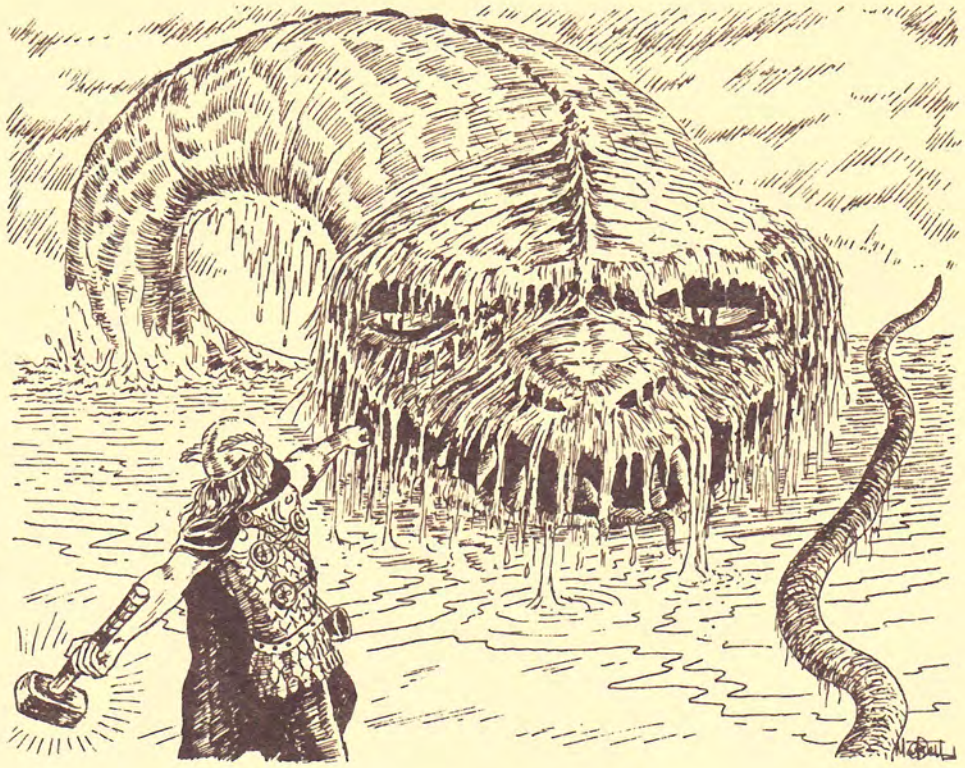
Loki, in the guise of an old woman, tricked Frigg into revealing that mistletoe had not sworn the oath. He lost no time in making a mistletoe dart, and then he approached Hod, who was, as usual, taking no part in the game of bouncing weapons off Balder. Loki put on his silkiest voice and persuaded Hod that it was disrespectful not to demonstrate his brother's invulnerability. Giving Hod the mistletoe dart, Loki led him to the circle of Gods around Balder, and guided his aim. The dart was cast, and it pierced Balder to the heart, killing him instantly.

Hod killed himself, once the realisation of the deed sank in, and the Gods wanted to kill Loki, the instigator and true killer of Balder, but the place where they met was consecrated ground. Loki escaped and the Aesir grieved for Balder. Frigg offered herself to anyone who would ride to Hel

and ask her to release Balder back into the world of the living. Hermod, Odin's son, mounted Sleipnir, the eight-legged horse, and rode for nine days to the gates of Hel, and there he asked the ruler of the realm of the dead to release Balder. Hel stipulated that everything in the world must weep for lost Balder and then he would be returned to life.

The messengers of the Gods persuaded the whole world to weep, even the giants; everything except one giantess named Thokk. Hard hearted and stony faced, she ignored every plea to shed a tear, and Balder remained in Hel's realm. In the minds of the Aesir the suspicion lingered that Thokk and Loki were one and the same.

Eventually the grief of the Aesir diminished, and the Gods held a feast in Aegir's Hall. Unasked, but still (by the rules of hospitality) welcome, Loki arrived. The Trickster taunted and insulted the assembled company of Aesir, casting the worst possible light on their past indiscretions. Only Thor, who arrived after Loki, has the courage to expel him, and then the hunt was on for the Trickster.



The Aesir

DEITY	Other Deity	Class & Level	AC	CB	CR	hp	MV	THACO	AR	#AT	Damage	Notes
Aegir		R15	-5	+3	18"	387	42"	-1	14	2	4-40+11	Aegir's charisma is 19, not 9 as stated in DDG
Bragi		B20	-4	+5	25"	388	18"	0	15	2	3-30+10	
	Idun	C15/B13	-3	+4	20"	329	12"	5	20	3/2	1-10/3-18+8	Bragi's wife. Basket of Apples can cure one wounded figure per round
Forseti		R15	-4	+4	21"	389	18"	0	15	2	1-10/3-18+12	
	Eir	C20	0	+4	21"	256	12"	6	21	1	2-8+8	Goddess of Healing
Frey		B15	-5	+4	21"	388	18"	0	15	2	1-10/3-18+12	
	Gerda	C12	0	+3	16"	216	12"	11	26	1	2-8+8	Frey's wife
Freya		C15	-3	+4	18"	339	18"	6	21	1	2-8+12	
Frigga		C15/B10	-4	+4	23"	366	15"	8	23	3/2	2-8+12	
	Lin Fulla Gna	C12	0	+3	16"	216	12"	11	26	1	2-8+8	Frigga's handmaidens
Heimdall		R17	-5	+4	21"	390	15"	-3	12	2	3-30+14	double damage to giants, vorpal effect on 17+ (14+ vs giants)
	Vor Syn	MU15	0	+3	16"	144	15"	13	29	1	2-8+5	Goddesses of Scrying
Hermod		R15	-3	+3	18"	340	15"	0	15	2	1-10/3-18+12	Balder's brother
	Var	C12	0	+3	16"	216	12"	11	26	1	2-8+8	Goddess of marriage
Honir		R15	-3	+3	18"	340	15"	0	15	2	1-10/3-18+12	Giver of souls
Magni		R15	-4	+4	20"	325	18"	-2	13	2	8-80	
	Sjofn Lofn	C12	0	+5	21"	216	18"	11	26	1	2-8+6	Goddesses of Love
Modi		R15	-4	+4	20"	379	21"	-1	14	2(4)	1-10/3-18+15	vorpal effect; double damage when beserk
	Saga	C12	0	+3	16"	216	12"	11	26	1	2-8+8	Goddess of Drunkenness
Njord		R12	-1	+4	18"	300	12"	4	19	3/2	1-10/3-18+10	Vanir; father of Frey and Freya
	Skadi	C12	0	+3	16"	216	12"	11	26	1	2-8+8	Giant wife of Njord, mother of Frey and Freya
Sif		B12	-4	+4	21"	349	18"	4	19	3/2	3-30+11	
Tyr		P25	-5	+4	26"	380	18"	-2	13	2	2-20+12	
	Snotra	M15	-5	+4	19"	320	32"	6	21	3	6-24+12	Goddess of Self-discipline
Uller		R18	-3	+4	21"	390	24"	-1	14	2	2-20+11	THACO & AR given for sword; never misses with longbow
Vali		R12	-2	+3	16"	300	18"	3	18	3/2	2-20+11	Odin's son
	Gefion	C12	0	+3	16"	216	12"	11	26	1	2-8+8	Goddess of Agriculture
Vidar		R18	-3	+4	21"	380	21"	-3	12	2	8-80	

Where other deities are listed, lesser goddesses have combined their forces with the greater god concerned. They are not necessarily married to them.

The Aesir Forces

Deity	Foot Troops	Archers	Followers	Other Forces/Notes
AEGIR	9,400	2,350		
Balder, Hod, Nanna	21,600	5,400	4,750	(Nanna is Balder's wife)
BRAGI, IDUN	29,600	7,400	10,000	
FORSETTI, EIR	21,800	5,450	5,000	
FREY, GERDA	2,880	720	3,500	11,520 elven archers, 2880 elven foot, Gullin-Bursti
FREYA	13,400	3,350	6,250	
FRIGA, LIN, FULLA, GNA	13,200	3,300	14,175	960 Valkyries
HEIMDALL, VOR, SYN	21,200	5,300	4,250	
HERMOD, VAR	6,200	1,550	11,250	
HONIR	7,000	1,750	3,275	
MAGNI, SJOFN, LOFN	22,500	5,550	7,500	
MODI, SAGA	22,600	5,650	7,250	
NJORD, SKADI	6,000	1,500	3,750	
Odin	21,400	5,340		Freke, Gere
SIF	12,800	3,200	4,750	
Thor	39,600	9,900		Tanngrisner, Tanngjost
TYR, SNOTRA	20,400	5,100	4,500	
ULLER		25,000		includes 20,000 longbowmen
VALI, GEFION	5,400	1,350	7,000	
VIDAR	16,800	4,200		

Gods given in lower case are already dead when the scenarios begin, but their troops fight on!

Troop Type	Fig/ Co	AC	HD/ Fig	Ratio	MV	Size	AR	ML	DL	#AT	Weapon/ Damage	Unit Type	Notes
Foot troops	45	4	36	2:1	9"	M	14	16	16	2	Longsword	Elite	
Archers	45	5	36	2:1	9"	M	14	16	16	2	Shortbow	Elite	Longswords for melee use
Longbowmen	45	5	36	2:1	9"	M	14	16	16	2	1-8	Elite	Longswords for melee use
Valkyries	9	4	20	2:1	36"	L	13	17	17			Elite	Stay aloft at medium height to co-ordinate the battle
Followers	19	4	35	5:1	9"	M	19	15	15	3/2	Broadsword	Elite	
Gullin-Bursti	1	-4	100hp	1:1	33"	L	21			2	2-20		Regeneration (3hp)
Freke, Gere	1	4	75hp	2:1	18"	L	36			1	2-20		Regeneration (3hp)
Tanngrisner, Tanngjost	1	0	100hp	2:1	24"	L	16			1	3-24		+6 damage if charging

Loki was eventually caught while hiding in the shape of a salmon. Vali, Loki's son, had been changed into a wolf and had run off towards Jotunheim after ripping Narvi, Loki's other son, apart. Loki was bound to three boulders with the entrails of Narvi, which became as hard as iron when wrapped around him. A venomous serpent was set above his face, which caused him to writhe in pain as its venom dripped onto him, giving rise to earthquakes. There Loki was to remain, with Sigyn, his wife, to hold a bowl beneath the serpent's fangs to catch some of the poison, until Ragnarok.

RAGNAROK

Still the Valkyries will gather the dead Heroes in Valhalla to await the Time that all know is coming. Every day the Heroes will fight in practice, and every evening they will feast in Valhalla, their practice wounds healed.

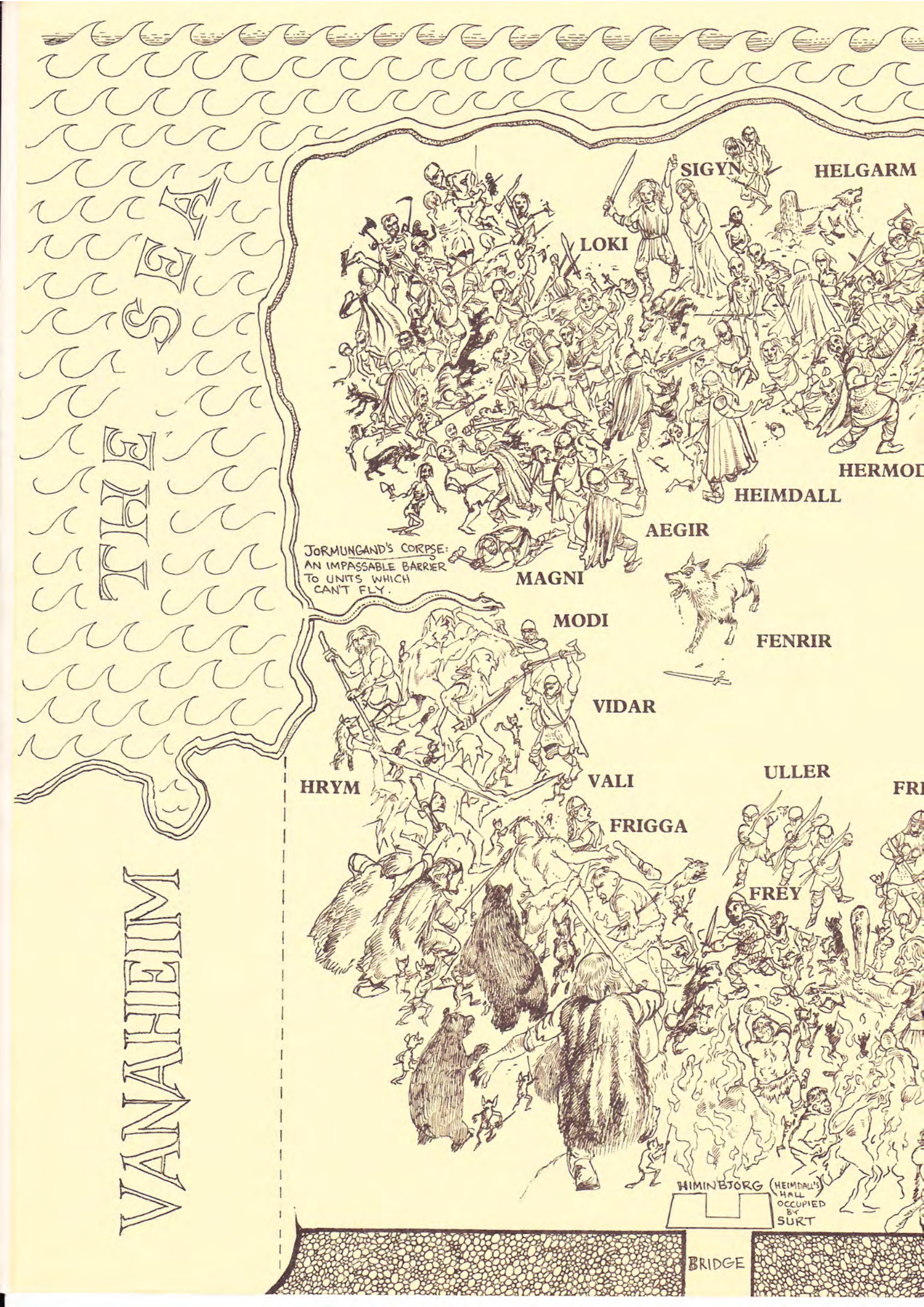
And so the Time begins. For three winters, the world of men, Midgard, will be at war without reason, honour or pity. Spring will come later each year; winter will be earlier and bite harder than before. The Fimbulwinter, the everlasting winter to end all winters, will converge from all four quarters, a presentiment of what is to come. Eggther, the watchman of the Giants, and Heimdall the watchman of the Gods, will see all this, and know that Ragnarok approaches.

The wolf children of the giantess of Ironwood, Skoll who chases the Sun and Hati, who chases the Moon, will catch and devour their prey. The Sun and Moon vanish, and the stars too. Loki's bonds — and all other bonds — will break at this sign. Fenris, the wolf-son of Loki, will also break free and the earthquakes caused by his struggles will trap all the dwarves and shake Yggdrasil, the World Tree, to its very roots.

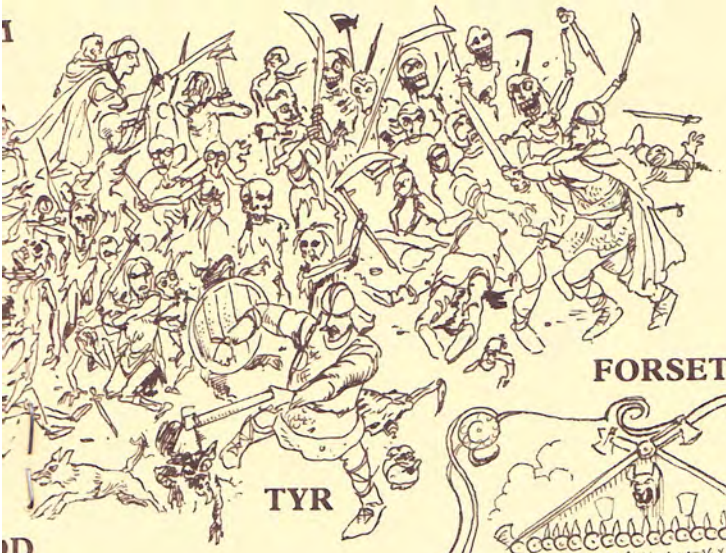
A cock crow will alert the giants, a second cock crow will awake the Gods and the Heroes of Valhalla, and a third will stir the dead from their sleep in the realm of Hel. Garm, the hound of Niflheim will bay, signalling the beginning of the end.

The Giants under Hrym will sail to the plain of Vigrid in Naglfar, a boat made from the nails of dead men, propelled by the waves caused by Jormungand, the Midgard Serpent. Jormungand will be struggling to reach dry land so that it, too, can take part in the battle on Vigrid. Loki will also sail to Vigrid, his crew will be the dead of the realm of Hel, those not chosen to enter Odin's hall of Valhalla. Black Surt and his fire giants cross the Bifrost bridge, cracking and breaking it behind them. Fenris and Jormungand advance side by side, jaws agape, filling the plain of Vigrid, 120 leagues in all directions.

Heimdall will sound his mighty horn, Gjall and shake the Nine Worlds; the Aesir will meet in Council. Odin will ride to Mimir's Spring to seek the advice of Mimir, although the outcome of Ragnarok has long been known through the words of the Sybil.


THE SEAS
VANAHEIM
SIGYN
HELGARM
LOKI
HERMOD
HEIMDALL
AEGIR
JORMUNGAND'S CORPSE: AN IMPASSABLE BARRIER TO UNITS WHICH CAN'T FLY.
MAGNI
MODI
FENRIR
VIDAR
HRYM
VALI
ULLER
FRIGGA
FREY
HIMINBJORG (HEIMDALL'S HALL OCCUPIED BY SURT
BRIDGE

ASGARD



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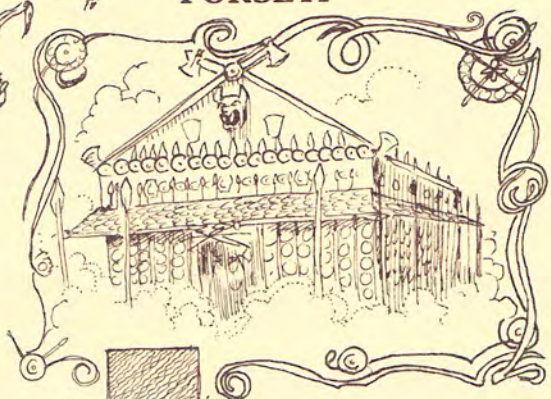


VALHALLA

NJORD

SIF

HONIR

The Einherjar and Gods will arm themselves and go out onto the Plain of Vigrid, Odin at their head. Odin will rush at Fenris, who will swallow the God in one gulp; Vidar, Odin's son, will take vengeance, forcing the great wolf's jaws open and piercing his heart with a sword. Thor and Jormungand battle, and the great serpent will be killed by a blow from Mjollnir, the hammer of Thor; Thor will stagger nine steps and die, a victim of Jormungand's terrible venom. And all around the Heroes of the Einherjar will battle against the giants and their host....

THE BATTLE

Ragnarok can only be adapted and changed for the **AD&D BATTLESYSTEM** game. A look at the various army lists will show the almost total impossibility of running the battle as a single game — unless there happen to be 30,000,000 model soldiers and a square mile of runway apron or salt flats to hand!

There are several ways, however, in which Ragnarok can be used. If the battle is being used as the end — or a new beginning — to a role-playing campaign, the DM will want as large a role for player characters as possible. This can be achieved by giving the PCs tasks on the battlefield, in which they and a small number of NPCs — possibly under the leadership of one of the Gods — must face large numbers of the enemy. Perhaps they must follow Heimdall as he rushes to attack Loki; or they could seek to recover the body of Thor. Run this just like a small dungeon, with encounter after encounter against the foe, and the rest of the battle noise all around them.

Thereafter, the PCs might be given command of a small section of the forces of the Gods, as the battle reaches its climax. The DM should run only that section of the battlefield where the PCs are active, comparing their achievements with the description of the battle as a whole. Once this option is employed, the **BATTLESYSTEM** will come into its own, as the PCs' forces struggle to survive against the overwhelming odds.

Two scenarios are provided; these will introduce the mechanics of the BATTLESYSTEM, and allow the DM to run the PCs through sufficient action to make them believe they have been through the Final Battle. Remember to describe the carnage that is going on all around that small part in which the PCs are involved. News could reach them from far-flung quarters of the battlefield — 'Tyr is fighting Garm, the great Hound of the Underworld!'; 'Heimdall is fallen — taking evil Loki with him!'; and so on.

If this is to be the last great action of a role-playing campaign, then the DM will be seeking to allow the PCs to die in a blaze of glory. For once, the DM should not be too frightened to overload the odds against the players! But if they are to be allowed a chance to be founders of the new races of Gods and men, then a whole new chapter could be starting in your gaming — assuming the PCs survive....

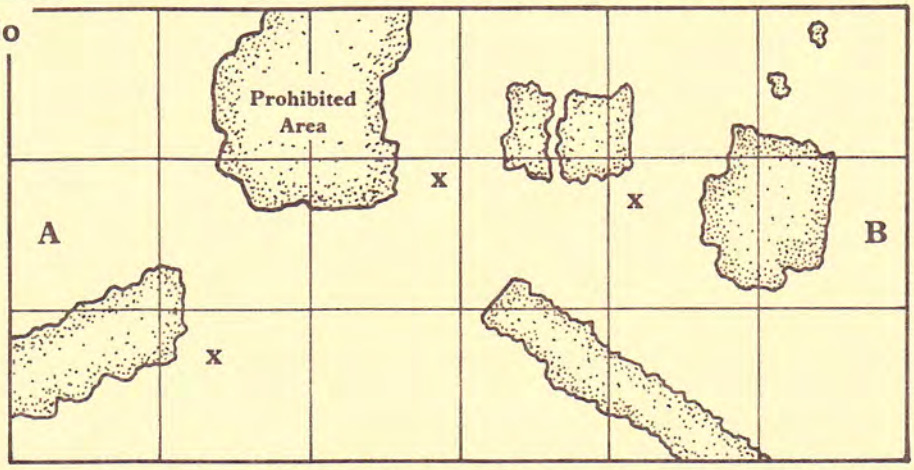
Both the scenarios provided take place after the fall of Odin, when the Gods were laid open to destruction. A great deal of the battle had already taken place, and the scenarios assume that spells have been cast. If this renders certain PCs impotent, the DM might allow that the PCs have been held in reserve up to this point. In any case, to take account of all the practice that they have indulged in during their stay in Valhalla, award all magic users and thieves with the fighting ability of 7th level fighters, while clerics and fighters have their effective levels boosted in proportion; each improvement of 2 in the THACO of MUs and Thieves should be matched by a improvement of 1 for clerics and fighters.

Basic BATTLESYSTEM Scenario

In the Rubble of Bifrost

Surt and his fire giants have crossed the remains of Bifrost, the Rainbow Bridge, and advanced into the battleline against the Aesir. Part of the force has been left behind.

Hidden in the rubble of Bifrost are a group of the Einherjar, cut off by the confusion of the battle. Their self-appointed leader, Regnir Crookneck, has decided that the time has come for the Heroes to rejoin the main battle, and fall upon the enemy line from the rear. There is, of course, the small problem of the giant rearguard....



The Heroes

Regnir Crookneck: F19; Army Commander; S 18[51], I 14, W 12, D 18, C 17, Ch 14; AC 1; CB 0; HD 19; CR 19"; hp 100; MV 12"; THACO 1; AR 15; Human; PPD 3; P/P 4; RSW 5; BW 4; Sp 6; Wpn/Dmg/#AT **longsword** +1 1-8/1-12 ; +3 damage for S 18[51].

2 companies of Einherjar: Elite; AC 4; HD/fig 36; MV 9"; AR 14; ML 16; DL 16; #FIG 45; Ratio 2:1; Size M; Commander Regnir Crookneck; Human F18; PPD 3; P/P 4; RSW 5; BW 4; Sp 6; Wpn/Dmg longsword 1-8/1-12; #AT 2/1.

Camp followers: Elite; AC 4; HD/fig 35; MV 9"; AR 19; ML 15; DL 15; #FIG 19; Ratio 5:1; Size M; Commander Regnir Crookneck; Human F7; PPD 10; P/P 11; RSW 12; BW 12; Sp 13; Wpn/Dmg broadswords 2-8/2-7; #AT 3/2.

The Giant Rearguard

Sons of Surt: Regular; AC 3; HD/fig 22; MV 12"; AR 20; ML 15; DL 14; #FIG 25; Ratio 2:1; Size L; Commander Lygnvi — CR 9"; Fire Giants; PPD 7; P/P 8; RSW 9; BW 8; Sp 10; Wpn/Dmg 5-30; impervious to fire, cannot hurl rocks in this scenario.

4 companies of the Dead: Mob; AC 9; HD/fig 10; MV 12"; AR 20; ML 8; DL 8; #FIG 20; Ratio 10:1; Size M; Ex-human F1; PPD 14; P/P 15; RSW 16; BW 17; Sp 17; Wpn/Dmg broadswords 2-8/2-7.

Children of Nidhogg: Mob; AC 4; HD/fig 36; MV 12"; AR 18; ML 12; ML 12; DL 10; #FIG 15; Ratio 5:1; Size L; Trolls; PPD 10; P/P 11; RSW 12; BW 12; Sp 13; Wpn/Dmg 5-8/5-8/2-12; Regeneration.

Set Up

The Giant player may deploy his troops at any point marked X on the map. The four companies of the Dead may be amalgamated into larger units if the player wishes.

The Heroes do not begin the game on the table, but may enter on side A on any of the first three turns. The Heroes receive a bonus of +2 to the die roll for determining initiative.

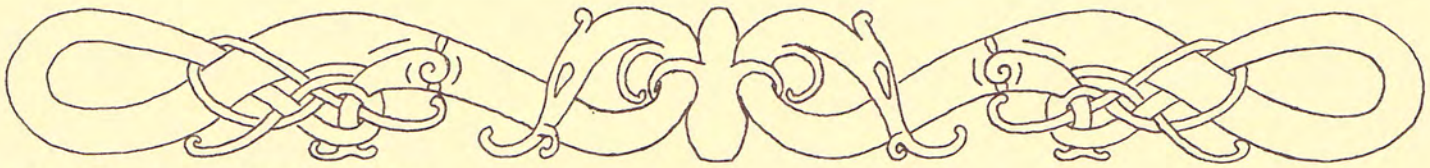
The Giant forces are inactive at the start of the game. They cannot be moved or attack until they are activated or attacked by an enemy unit. The Giant player may attempt to activate a unit whenever an enemy unit moves within 3" of it. As soon as this happens, the Giant player rolls 2d6. If the result 8 or more (10 or more in the case of the Dead), the unit is activated and may be moved as normal during its next turn. One is added to this die roll for every previously activated unit.

The DM should command of the Giant forces. The players should control the Heroes. If a PC is better suited to lead the Heroes than Crookneck, that character should be Army Commander. Other PCs will lead individual units. All PCs should determine their fate if the units they command suffers casualties in the course of this scenario. The Heroes' object is to exit as many troops as possible through Side B by Turn 18. If the PCs are still within the area of the Map after that turn, they will be trapped by ever-increasing Giant forces, and will have to fight until their inevitable death, as Fate has decreed....

If this scenario is being played without role-playing characters involved, the following VPs should be awarded — *Heroes*: 2VPs for each unit exited from Side B by Turn 14; 1VP for each Giant unit destroyed. *Giants*: 2VPs for each Hero unit destroyed; 1VP for each Hero unit still on the Map after Turn 18.

The Giant Leaders

DEITY	Class & Level	AC	CB	CR	hp	MV	THAC0	AR	#AT	Damage	Notes
Fenrir		-4			400	24"	2	17	1	9-90	450 warg bodyguards
Hel	C20/A15	-5	+4	20"	350	24"	6	21	3/2	5-50+8	Bodyguard of 2100 spectres, 1500 hell hounds and Garm
Hrym	Cloud Giant	-2	+4	19"	320	24"	-3	12	2	3-30+14	Commands the frost giants after Thrym's death, although he is a cloud giant; 3000 frost giant bodyguards
Loki	R12/A15	-4	+4	22"	300	15"	3	18	3/2	1-10/3-18+12	Bodyguard of 2100 spectres and 2400 dead heroes
Sigyn	C12	0	+3	16"	216	12"	-3	12	2	6-60+14	Loki's wife
Surt	Fire Giant	-2	+4	23"	380	15"	3	12	2	6-60+14	Bodyguard of 3000 fire giants
Skoll, Hati & 7 others	Wolves	-2			300	24"	4	19	1	6-60	Each has a 225 warg bodyguards; sons of Fenrir



The Giants and their Forces

Species	No of Companies	Fig/ Co	AC	HD/ Fig	Ratio	MV	Size	AR	ML	DL	Weapon/ Damage	Unit type	Notes
Bugbears	5,000	6	5	30	10:1	9"	L	26	10	8	2-8	Regular	
Dead	2,340,000	10	9	10	10:1	12"	M	20	8	8	Broadsword	Mob	AR is improved by 4th level sergeants & 7th level captains
Dead Heroes	2,000	20	4	35	5:1	12"	M	13	13	13	Broadsword	Elite	Heroes 7th level, sergeants 9th level, captains 12th level
Ettins	4,000	15	3	20	2:1	12"	L	20	15	13	2-16/3-18	Mob	
Frost Giants	16,000	15	4	20	2:1	12"	L	20	15	13	4-24	Regular	Hurl rocks for 2-20
Fire Giants	28,000	15	3	22	2:1	12"	L	20	15	14	5-30	Regular	Hurl rocks for 2-20
Ghosts	10,000	15	0	20	2:1	9"	M		16	18		Mob	Aging attack worthless against Einherjar, but have usual fear effect
Ghasts	1,000	6	4	40	10:1	15"	M	15	12	12	1-4x2/1-8	Mob	Stench, paralysis
Ghouls	10,000	6	6	20	10:1	9"	M	16	10	8	1-3x2/1-6	Mob	Cause paralysis
Gnolls, foot	56,000	5	5	20	10:1	9"	L	16	10	8	2-8	Regular	
Gnoll archers	5,000	5	7	20	10:1	9"	L	16	10	8	1-8x2	Regular	Use broadswords in melee
Goblins, foot	53,000	9	6	9	10:1	6"	S	20	10	10	1-6	Regular	
Goblins, sling	15,000	9	6	9	10:1	6	S	20	10	10	1-4	Regular	Use daggers in melee
Goblins, cavalry	5,000	9	6	30	10:1	18"	L	20	13	11	1-4x2/1-6	Regular	Mounted on wargs
Hell Hounds	20,000	10	4	55	5:1	12"	M	19	13	13	1-10	Mob	Breath weapon
Hill Giants	116,000	15	4	16	2:1	12"	L	22	13	11	2-16	Mob	
Hobgoblins, foot	44,000	6	5	12	10:1	9"	M	18	10	11	1-8	Regular	
Hobgoblin archers	11,000	6	5	12	10:1	9"	M	18	10	11	1-6/1-6	Regular	Use shortswords in melee
Kobolds	69,000	10	7	5	10:1	6"	S	20	9	9	1-4	Regular	
Ogres	10,000	10	4	21	5:1	9"	L	21	12	10	1-10	Mob	
Orc, foot	138,000	6	6	10	10:1	9"	M	19	10	10	1-8	Regular	
Orc, crossbow	15,000	6	6	10	10:1	9"	M	19	10	10	1-4	Regular	Use shortswords in melee
Orc, shortbow	15,000	6	6	10	10:1	9"	M	19	10	10	1-6/1-6	Regular	Use shortswords in melee
Shadows	3,500	3	7	36	10:1	12"	M	16	10	8	2-5	Mob	Strength drain
Spectres	2,000	4	2	15	5:1	15"	M	18	12	14	1-8x3	Mob	Triple damage for double level drain effect
Trolls	10,000	6	4	36	5:1	12"	L	18	12	10	5-8x2/2-12	Mob	Regeneration
Vampires	600	6	1	46	5:1	12"	M	17	15	15	5-10x3	Mob	Regeneration, but cannot return to tomb so die normally; Double level drain causestriple damage
Wights	1,400	4	5	46	10:1	12"	M	15	10	11	1-4x2	Mob	Level drain causes double damage
Wraiths	3,200	6	4	31	5:1	12"	M	20	12	14	1-6x2	Mob	Level drain causes double damage

Note that creatures which normally require magical weapons to hit them are damaged by normal weapons due to the nature of Vigrid and its distance from the Negative Material Plane.

Intermediate Scenario

The Death of Fenrir

Odin is dead, swallowed by Fenrir. Vidar, Odin's son, attacks towards the huge wolf with the intention of slaying it, taking his retinue of Einherjar with him.

Vidar and the Heroes

Vidar: R18/god; Army commander; S 25 (+7,+14), I 20, W 19, D 25, C 25, Ch 22; AC -3; CB +4; HD 380hp; CR 21"; MV 21"; THACO -3; AR 12; PPD 2; P/P 2 ; RSW 2; BW 2; Sp 2; Wpn/Dmg/#AT 2x8-80

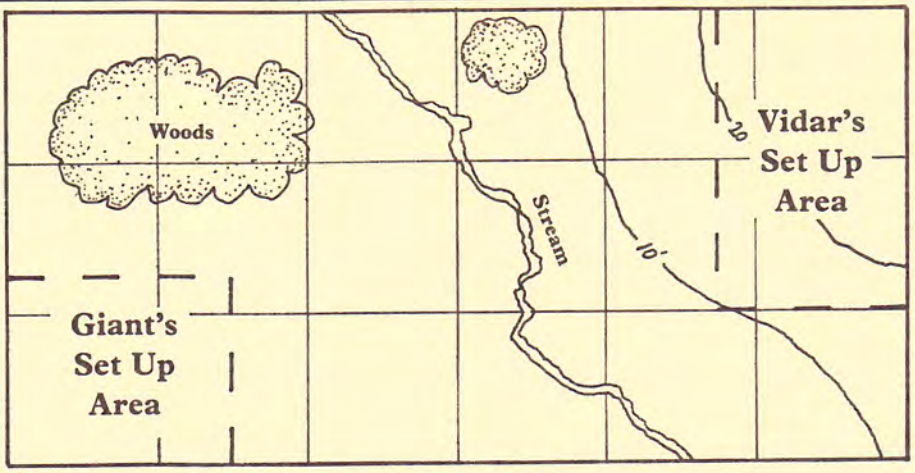
2 companies of Einherjar: as Basic scenario; commanded by Thorfinn Thorfinnson (CR 12") and Eric Halfhand (CR 14").

2 companies of longbowmen: Elite; AC 5; HD/fig 36; MV 9"; AR 14; ML 16; DL 16; #FIG 45; Ratio 2:1; Size M; Commanders Harald and Sigurd Sigurdson - CR 13"; F18; PPD 3; P/P 4; RSW 5; BW 4; Sp 6; Wpn/Dmg longbows 1-8/1-8, longswords 1-8/1-12, #AT 2.

1 company of Followers: as above, except that they are commanded by Rolf the Black — CR 7".

Fenrir and the Forces of Evil

Fenrir: the Fenris Wolf; Hero; AC -4; HD 400hp; MV 24"/12"; THACO 2; AR 17; MR 99%; PPD 2; P/P 2; RSW 2; BW 2; Sp 2; Wpn/Dmg/#AT bites for 9-90.



Fenrir's Bodyguard: mob; AC 6; HD/fig 25; MV 18"; AR 20; ML 12; DL 10; #FIG 90; Ratio 5:1; Size L; Worgs; PPD 11; P/P 12; RSW 13; BW 13; Sp 14; Wpn/Dmg bite 3-12.

2 Companies of the Dead: as above, in the Basic scenario.

The Sons of Thrym: Regular; AC 4; HD/fig 20; MV 12"; AR 20; ML 15; DL 13; #FIG 25; Ratio 2:1; Size L; Commander Ygvigni - CR 5"; Frost Giants; PPD 8; P/P 9; RSW 10; BW 9; Sp 11; Wpn/Dmg 4-24; hurl rocks for 2-20.

Skullcrackers: Regular; AC 7; HD/fig 20; MV 9"; AR 16; ML 10; DL 8; #FIG 15; Ratio 10:1; Size L; Commander Manripper - CR 6"; Gnolls; PPD 14; P/P 15; RSW 16; BW 17; SP 17; Wpn/Dmg composite longbow 1-6/1-6, longswords 1-8/1-12.

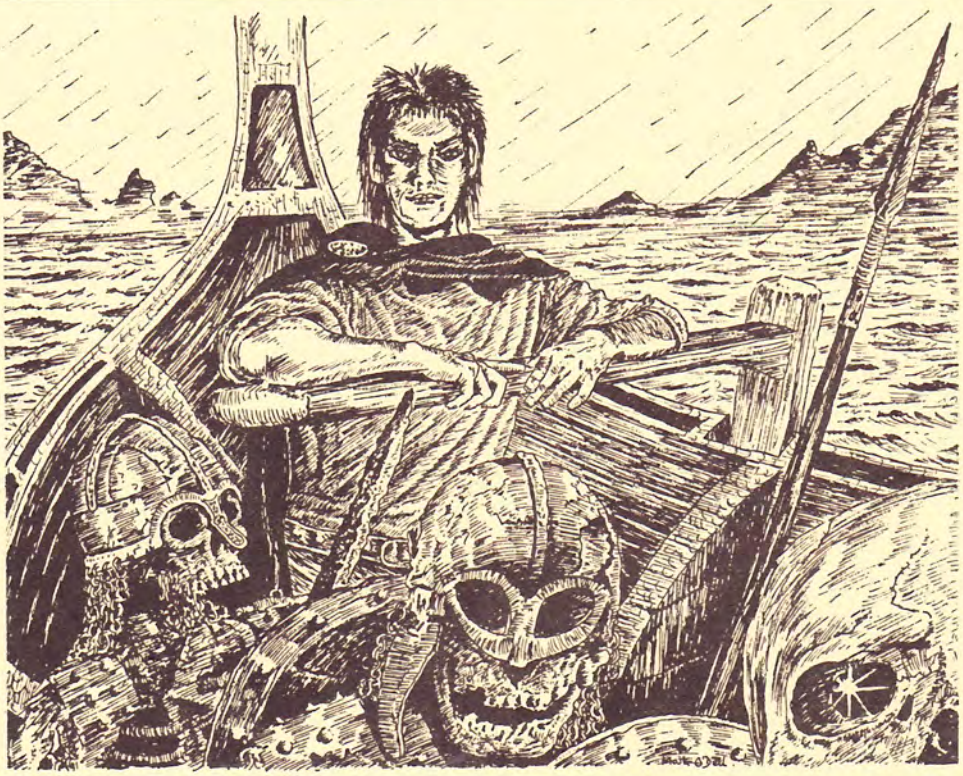
Set Up

Toss a coin to determine who sets up first. The players then alternate deploying their units in any positions in the indicated set up areas until all are deployed. Fenrir must be deployed in the centre of the mob of bodyguard worgs. The Heroes are side A during the first two turns.

Vidar will be the Army Commander even if a higher level PC is available. The Heroes will have achieved success when they get Vidar into combat with Fenrir, but they will be honour-bound to protect the God while this combat is resolved.

If no role-playing characters are involved, the scenario is decided solely on whether Vidar engages Fenrir is combat.

Many other scenarios can be generated using the tables provided. The inclusion of the undead is may seem particularly odd, given that Norse mythology had only one kind of undead: a weak 'revenant' type zombie that was unable to rest until its aims in life had been fulfilled. The undead are included primarily because of their importance within the structure of the AD&D game. They are certainly evil enough to have a place within the ranks of the giant army. The inclusion of orcs, goblins, hobgoblins and the like may also seem distinctly 'unNorse', but these creatures are the closest AD&D game equivalent to the smaller giant kin that appear in some versions of the Norse legends.



THE LEGEND

According to Norse legend, Ragnarok ends (and with it, the Nine Worlds) in the following manner:

Heimdall will find Loki and slay him, but in doing so will sustain tremendous wounds and die himself. Surt will find Frey and kill her. Tyr will search for Fenris, to revenge himself for the loss of his hand when the wolf was first bound. Fenris will have already been slain by Vidar, in revenge for the death of Odin, and Tyr will meet Garm, the hound of the underworld. Tyr and Garm will slay each other.

The Einherjar, gathered by the Valkyries solely for this battle, will be long dead. With the death of Tyr all the Aesir are gone and the Giants and their evil kind will have won the day, but only for a short time. Devastated and wracked beyond endurance, the earth will become a shapeless mass, and even the remaining stars will fall into the void. Surt will set fire to all of the Nine Worlds and the seas will boil; the earth will sink into nothingness. Only Yggdrasil, the World Tree, will remain, scorched and battered, but still whole.

But, as the Norns predicted, a new Middle Earth will rise from the void, so rich and fruitful that crops would grow where no seed has been sown. And into this new world would come survivors of the battle, to build the new race of Gods and Men.

CREDITS

Design **Chris Felton**
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Maps **Robin Grenville-Evans**

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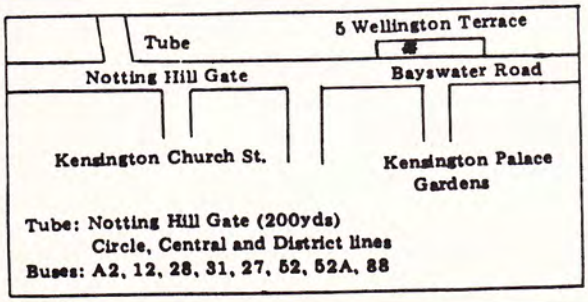

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THE NORSE PLANES OF GLADSHEIM

by Rod Stevenson

The Norse gods were unlike those of other pantheons in many respects. In one particular way, these differences will become very obvious in high-level play, namely that the gods did not normally interfere with the lives of mortals on Midgard. Thus, if the time comes when your player characters are looking to rewrite some of the great sagas with themselves as central figures, this is most likely to occur on the planes of Gladsheim — the homes of the deities. This option is even more likely if your players' characters die honourably and bravely, and you decide that they qualify to join the heroes in Valhalla.

The DM has a great deal to consider when running adventures on other planes, and this article is designed to give a few hints on what is required. As usual, the more work that is put into considering the differences between adventuring on the planes of the Norse gods and normal campaigning, the better the experience will be for all concerned.

The Geography of the Planes

There is no 'official' description of the spatial relationships between the various sub-planes of the Norse mythos; the myths themselves are vague about the layout of the homes of the Gods, Men and the Dead. However, they are precise enough to contradict the information on the Outer Planes as described in **Legends and Lore** pp113-24, 128-33. Even the use of the name Gladsheim is confusing in this respect. In Legends & Lore, Gladsheim is the Outer Plane wherein the Norse pantheon resides, and Asgard is but the first 'layer' of that plane; in the myths themselves Gladsheim is the Place of Joy within Asgard where the Gods had their seats. There are other variations, so the first decision that the DM will have to make is whether to follow the 'official' description of the Plane of Gladsheim in L&L (which would be best if inter-planar travel is likely to be a regular thing in your campaign) or the 'classical' interpretations of Norse myth, which would be desirable in a Viking-based campaign.

The 'classical' interpretation of the Norse milieu is one of three 'layers' — Asgard, the home of the Gods, which contains Valhalla, and which is bounded by Vanaheim and Alfheim; Midgard, which is the home of Man, and which is bounded by the homes of the Giants, Dwarves and Dark Elves; and Helheim, wherein the Dead reside. This interpretation of the Norse universe is depicted in Diagram 1.

If the L&L interpretation is to be followed, Midgard would be the equivalent of the Prime Material Plane, and — through Bifrost, the Rainbow Bridge — would be linked to the uppermost layer of the plane of Gladsheim, namely Asgard. Gladsheim then consists of the 'layers' of Asgard and Vanaheim, along with the demi-planes of Alfheim and Jotenheim, connected to the main layers. These places differ from the others; Jotenheim is a land of broken rocks, poisoned streams; a barren, dreary landscape. Alfheim (Elf-home) is the non-permanent afterlife dwelling of all elves and their deities. Helheim and Niflheim must then be considered as lower layers in the plane of Hades.

Much like Scandinavia, the geography of the planes consists of wild, forested mountains; snow fields; fjords and vast tracts of Northern Wilderness.

The details as presented below are — for the most part — general enough to be used in either a 'classical' or 'official' interpretation of the milieu. Where differences arise, players following the 'classical' style will need to make a few alterations.

Asgard

The 'layer' of Gladsheim known as Asgard is unusual in the fact that, unlike most other planes where the more important the deity, the further 'down' that deity will live, the majority of the Greater Deities of the Norse pantheon live in Asgard, the uppermost layer. The halls of the Gods dominate the landscape; Valhalla (Odin's Court), Breidablik (Balder's Hall), Glitner (Hall of Forseti, Balder's son) and Valaskialf (Odin's Palace). This is the only plane that touches the Rainbow Bridge, which links the Gods to Midgard and is guarded by Heimdall, who will herald the battle of Ragnarok.

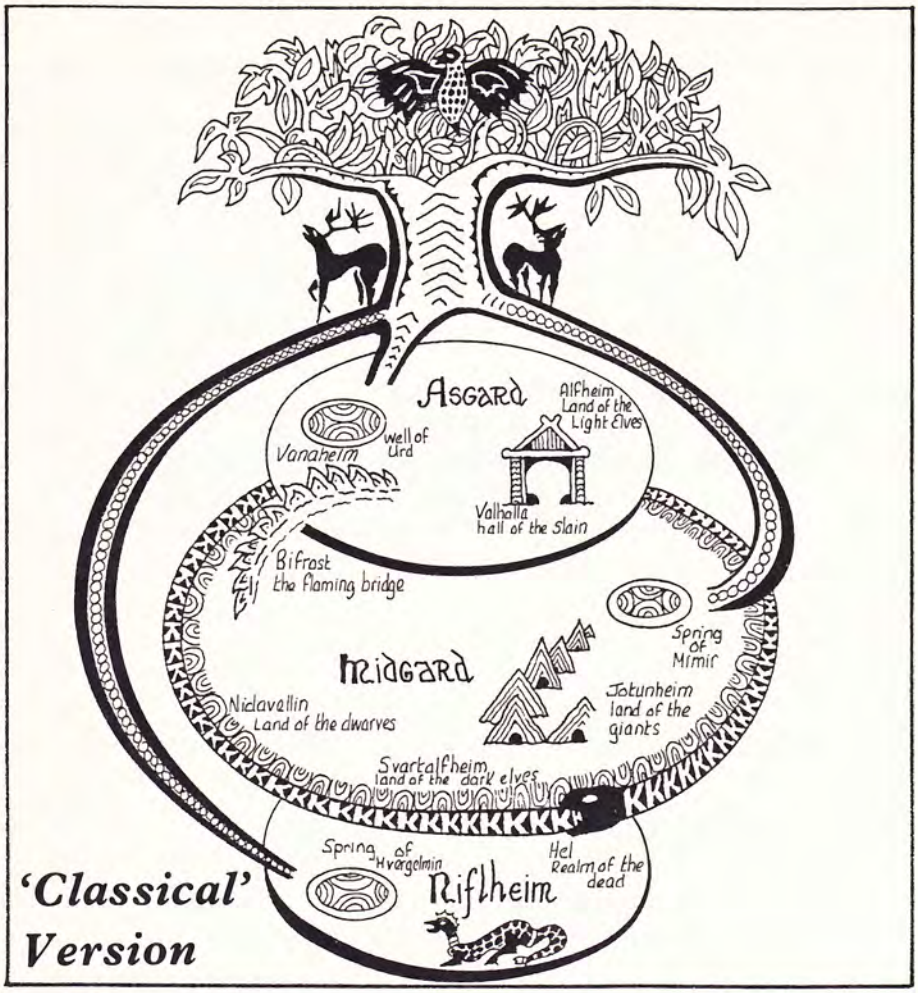
Asgard is surrounded by a mighty wall, built by a giant mason as part of a wager. Beyond lies the great Plain of Vigrid — where the final conflict will be fought.

Asgard is home to many creatures who are quite rare on the Prime Material Plane, as shown on the following encounter table. Most active on the plane will be the Valkyries, bringing the souls of the exceptionally brave from the battlefields of Midgard to join their peers in the massive force known as the Aenseis. Just what will be the result of the player characters encountering these, or any of the gods normally resident on Asgard, will depend on their motives. Clearly, the gods will react to any challenge to their authority with all their might, which is considerable. If the player characters have arrived on Asgard as a result of dying heroically in battle, then they will live in Odin's great hall, served by the Valkyries and enjoying endless tourneys and feats of war until called to face the ultimate test of Ragnarok.

Jotunheim

In the myths, Jotunheim, the Land of the Giants, either lay within Midgard to the east, or across an ocean. In terms of the L&L version, Jotunheim will be a sub-'layer' of Gladsheim, separated from Asgard by the River Iving. This is a blighted land, mostly wilderness, barren, dry and unwelcoming. What little water there is comes in the form of slow-running, stagnant or poisoned streams, winding their way through the rocks that litter the landscape.

Jotunheim is divided into three sections. There is the cold mountain scrubland of the Frost Giants, the humid, unbearably hot desert wilderness of the Fire Giants, and the 'no-man's land' which forms the border between the two. Thrym, his ten



'Classical' Version

brothers and the greatest of his warriors reside in a hall deep in the mountains of Jotunheim. Every lunar month, the whole force meets in the valley immediately behind the Hall to test each other in readiness for Ragnarok. Challenges are offered, with a successful challenge resulting in the winner taking the position of the fallen. Thrym has been challenged but twice, and won on both occasions.

Across hot plains, and the long desert wilderness, lies the underground palace of Surtur, Lord of the Fire Giants. This awesome giant rules a hierarchy not dissimilar to that of the Plane of 9 Hells, with which Sutur maintains important connections, so that an ambassador from one of the layers of that dread place will be present at all times.

Surtur's palace is sited near an active volcano, which supplies the heat the Fire Giants enjoy. Any humanoid entering the hall will suffer 1-12 points of damage a round, unless they are strongly insulated from the heat.

Both Surtur and Thrym have connections with Loki. Angur-Boda, the giantess is one of his consorts, and their offspring was the terrible serpent of Midgard, Jormungandr.

Vanaheim

Vanaheim is known as a much wilder place than the regulated (by Gladsheim standards!) Asgard. It is a harsh land of constant winter. Fewer deities reside in this layer, but there are many other inhabitants.

The seas of Vanaheim are the realm of Aegir the Unpredictable, who, although normally friendly with the Vanir and Aesir, will attack anyone who enters his realm. Also resident on this plane are many creatures not normally found on the Prime Material Plane, such as the satyr-like Korreds, Grugach and valley Elves, an arctic variety of Faerie Dragon, and exiled creatures from Jotunheim, Spriggans, Firbolg, Verbeeg and Formorian Giants. There is a connection between the demi-plane of Alfheim and Vanaheim, through which characters may travel.

Alfheim

This is the afterlife plane for all Elves professing the religion of Frey the Vanir, ruler of Alfheim. As noted in **Legends & Lore**, elves of the Prime Material Plane have spirits, and therefore do not remain on the afterlife plane throughout eternity, but return to the Prime Material Plane to be reincarnated. Alfheim could easily be mistaken for one of the Paradise planes, since the whole landscape is one of dreams; glistening meadows, crystal waterfalls, massive blue mountains of ice. Any characters entering this fantastic land will have to save vs Spells at -10 or walk aimlessly until they are met by some person native to Alfheim.

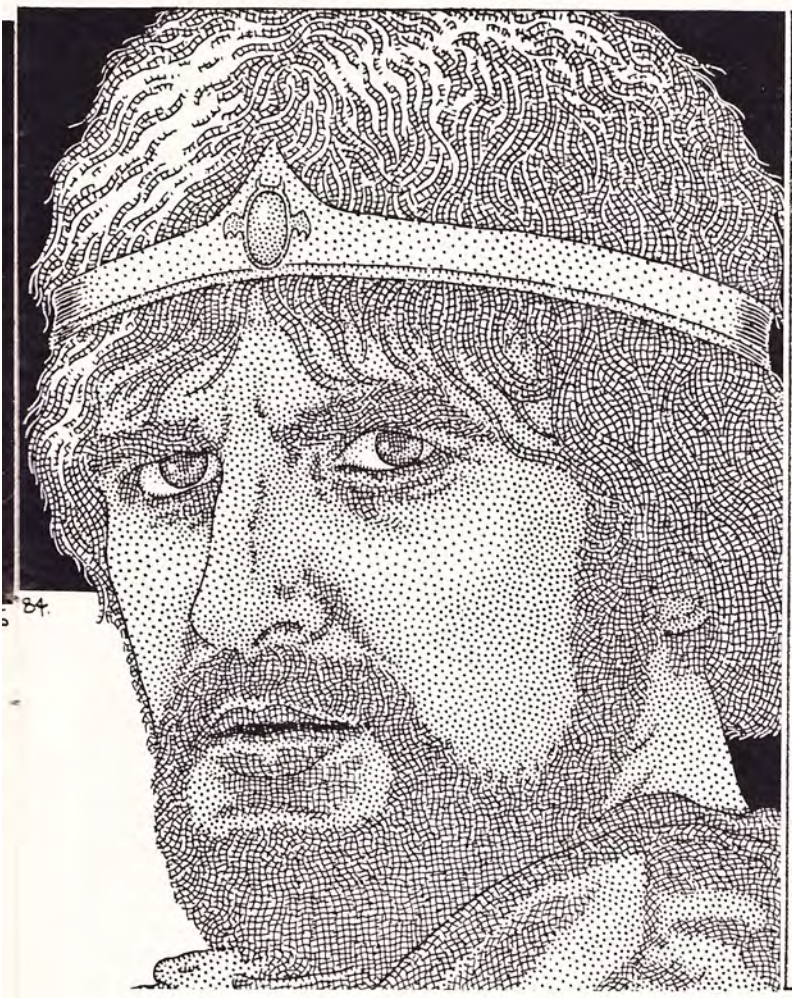
Spell Alterations

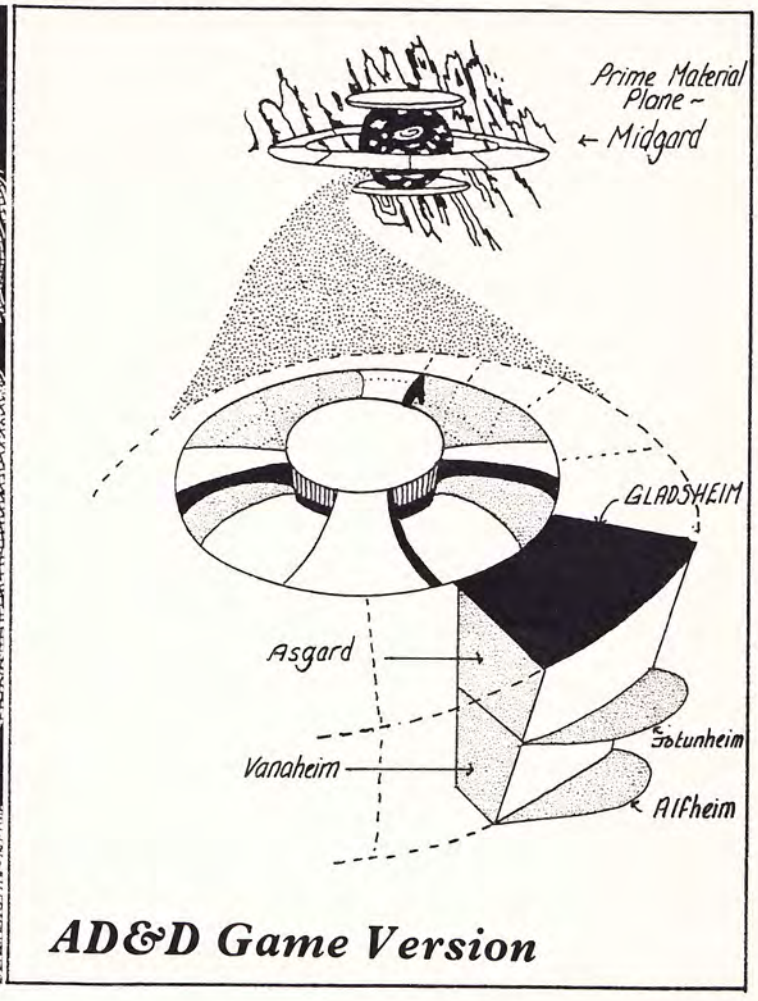
Basic reality is very different from that on the Prime Material Plane. The alterations given below are for the main levels of Gladsheim; the DM should consider further alterations for the demi-planes of Jotenheim and Alfheim.

The chaotic nature of Gladsheim will cause a random effect when spells are cast, on a roll of 1 on 1d6. The DM should decide how individual spells are warped.

Additionally, characters will not be able to control creatures or flora native to Gladsheim, or use spells based on control or mind-related subjects, due to the influences within the realm of Gladsheim. No contact of deities outside Gladsheim is possible, and clerics and druids of other deities will not be able to regain spells above 2nd level. Other spells, particularly those that influence weather or create versions of natural phenomena (like **fireball**, **ice storm** or **lightning bolt**) will have their range and effect halved. Some magical items will also have their effects altered. Spellcasters native to Gladsheim do not suffer these penalties. Finally, the ruler of any plane of existence has a complete and final veto on any **wish**, **limited wish**, **alter reality** or similar spell cast in his or her realm. The chaotic nature of the Norse deities means that no action would be taken except in cases where the direct interests of the senior deity were threatened.

Rod Stevenson





AD&D Game Version

Random Encounters for Gladsheim

Check encounters after each 20 turns, 10% chance.

Roll	Asgard	Vanaheim	Alfheim	Jotunheim
1	2-5 Moon Dogs (MM2)	2-5 Korreds (MM2)	1-4 High Elves (MM)	1-5 Bactrian Camels (MM)
2	10-20 Atomies (MM2)	5-12 Jackals (MM2)	1-4 Gray Elves (MM)	1 Small Falcon (MM2)
3	1-12 Buckawns (MM2)	1-2 Tigers (MM)	1-4 Wood Elves (MM)	2-5 Wolves (MM)
4		1-2 Weasels (MM2)	1-6 Sea Elves (MM)	1-2 Trolls (MM/FF)
5	4-24 Beserkers (MM2)	1-2 Aurumvorax (MM2)	1-4 Valley Elves (MM2)	1 Cockatrice (MM)
6	10-30 Valkyries (L&L)	5-12 Valkyries (L&L)	1-4 Grugach Elves (MM2)	2-5 Jackals (MM2)
7			1-3 Half Elves (MM)	1 Normal Raven (MM2)
8		1-6 Faerie Dragons (MM2)	1 Normal Falcons (MM2)	1-2 Cave Bears (MM)
9	2-4 Valley Elves (MM2)	2-12 Bowlers (MM2)	6-36 Valkyrie (L&L)	1-2 White Dragons (MM)
10	2-4 Grugach Elves (MM2)	2-12 Beserkers (MM2)		1-10 Frost Giants (MM)
11	5-10 Korred (MM2)	1-2 White Dragons (MM)		1-5 Spriggan Giants (MM2)
12	2-4 Jackals (MM)	1-2 Cave Fishers (MM2)		1-5 Verbeeg Giants (MM2)
13	1 Normal Squirrel (MM2)	1-6 Ice Trolls (MM/FF)		5-12 Fire Giants (MM)
14	1 Black Bear (MM)	1-6 Remorhaz (MM)		10-30 Herd Animals (MM)
15	1 Greater Raven (MM2)	1-12 Polar Bears (MM)	1-4 Hollyphants (MM2)	20-50 Jermlaines (FF)
16	1 Falcon (MM)	1-6 Galeb Duhr (MM2)	1-6 Oliphants (MM2)	5-10 Jackals (MM2)
17	1 Tiger (MM)	1 Titan (MM) (Lesser 50%/Major 35%/Elder15%)	1-20 Pegasi (MM)	1-5 Flightless Birds (MM)
18	1 Spriggan (MM2)	1-2 Will-o-wisp (MM)	1 Minimal (MM2)	2-5 Kenku (FF)
19	1 Galeb Duhr (MM2)	1 Boggart (MM2)	1 Black Bear (MM)	1 Formorian Giant (MM2)
20	1 Deity (Demigod 50%/Lesser 25%/Greater 25%)	1 Deity (Demigod 75%/Lesser 20%/Greater 5%)	1 Deity (Vanir 85%/Demi 5%/Lesser 5%/Greater 5%)	1 Firbolg Giant (MM2)

DISPEL CONFUSION SPECIAL

with thanks to Carl Sargent

In this series of DC Specials we have sought to answer some of the questions that have come up as a result of ambiguities and discrepancies between the two major **AD&D**™ game rulebooks, the **Players' Handbook** and the **DMG**. The DMG partially updated the PH, and as a result it contains some information which ought to be known to players with spell-casting characters.

In most cases, we have followed the rule that where there is a discrepancy between the two rulebooks, the latter — the DMG — will be correct. Most of the remaining comments are our attempt to solve some of the problems that have arisen since the DMG was published.

*Next month, **Dispel Confusion** will be back to normal, looking to answer your individual questions about role-playing games. If you are having a problem, send an SSAE to:*
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CLERICAL SPELLS

FIRST LEVEL

Detect Magic: All that is detected is whether the magic is 'strong or weak', and if a dweomer due to spell-casting is present in (part of) the area scrutinized, nothing about the nature of that spell can be learned. This is *not* the same as the MU spell of the same name (last issue).

Detect Evil: The strength of the emanating evil will always be detected by this spell (in the absence of any magical shielding, of course). The DMG also specifies that if the evil is 'overwhelming', there is a 10% per level chance for the casting cleric to detect the alignment of the evil (LE, NE, CE). However, despite the PH claim that emanations of evil from creatures can be detected with this spell, such emanations will only rarely be detected, as the DMG makes clear; 'Characters who are very strongly aligned, do not stray from their faith, and who are of a relatively high level (at least 8th or higher) might radiate evil or good if they are intent upon appropriate actions.' DMs may ignore the element of faith, since it suggests religious devotion; a high-level, godless MU about to cast **death spell** should be detected! Extrapolation to non-humanoid monsters is not clear. If one equates 8th level with 8HD, this spell is not going to detect many monsters.

A Paladin's natural ability to detect evil should be treated in the same way, with the percentage chance for detecting the alignment of overwhelming evil being the same as for a cleric of the same level (unlike the turning ability, the paladin has this ability naturally at first level).

Resist Cold: An important point is that this spell gives a saving throw against **ice storms**, mentioned in the PH, where none normally exists. This saving throw should be against spells with a +3 bonus (as well as any others due to dexterity, **rings of protection**, etc). What is not clear is the damage involved. I recommend that damage be full (failed ST) or halved (successful ST); this is different from **cone of cold** (where the save differentiates between half and quarter damage), reflecting the fact that the cone normally has a saving throw anyway, whereas the Storm does not.

Type II **ice storms** (the blinding/slowing variety) are *not* protected against by resist cold, because the effects of this application of the spell do not cause physical damage from magical cold (which is what resist cold protects against). Finally, if a **wall of ice** is cast in the air to fall on creatures, it should be treated in exactly the same way as the hailstorm version of **ice storm**.

SECOND LEVEL

Detect Charm: There is some scope for confusion over the DMG entry that says that **charm** spells cast by creatures entitle the charmee to a saving throw versus magic, and if the save is successful, the **detect charm** spell does *not* pick up the fact that the charm exists. Well, that makes sense — if you're not charmed, there's no charm to detect. But what the entry means is that when a creature with an innate charm ability (eg, vampires, nixies) successfully charms a victim, that victim is entitled to a saving throw if a detect charm is cast subsequently. Thus a charming vampire is even more villainous than a charming MU, for the vampire's handiwork might never be spotted....

Find Traps: There is a 10% chance per level of the casting cleric that, when a magical trap is detected, the type of magic involved (alteration, enchantment/charm, etc) will be detected also. The spell will also reveal the form (but not the name) of a **glyph of warding**, but this will not mean that the cleric will necessarily know what the glyph might do, unless the same glyph and its effects have been observed before.

Resist Fire: It is odd that while the PH specifically states that **resist cold** gives a saving throw against **ice storms**, and by extrapolation **walls of ice** used to cause damage, this higher-level spell does not give a saving throw against fire-based spells which normally have none. Since the obvious case is **wall of fire**, this may be an oversight. DMs are urged to consider playing resist fire as conferring a save against **wall of fire** (with a +3 bonus) and related no-save, fire-based spells, with the save determining full or half damage.

Speak With Animals: Monsters cannot, of course, be conversed with using this spell, but the role of giant animals is unclear. In #47 of **DRAGON**® magazine, the **Sage Advice** column said they should not be available for comment; this is probably the best way to handle this spell.

THIRD LEVEL

Animate Dead: An important additional point in the DMG is that skeletons and zombies of monsters can be created with this spell. These undead have the same number of hit dice as the original monster (skeletons), or one more (zombies). Only demi-humans and humanoids can be animated in this way. Thus a fire giant skeleton has 11HD+2-5hps and a fire giant zombie has 12HD+2-5hps. However, the PH description of how many skeletons/zombies can be created with this spell needs restating in terms of hit dice. So, for the purposes of this spell, a fire giant zombie would be the equivalent of six normal (2HD) zombies, and only a cleric of 6th level or higher could animate such a monster.

The DMG does not say whether such monster undead would have the hit rolls of the normal varieties of undead or those of a monster of an equivalent number of HD; DMs should allow the latter (thus the fire giant zombie hits as a 12+HD creature). Nor does the DMG state whether the damage should be for a 'normal' zombie or the same as the living creature. Where the damage is caused by natural body weaponry which would survive death, damage should be done by the monster as it was in life. In other cases, the DM might wish to reduce the damage to reflect the more sluggish nature of the undead.

Finally, when animating characters, levels of experience and ability scores are irrelevant. A 1st level thief and a 17th level fighter will both become a 2HD zombie.

Dispel Magic: The PH states that this spell will 'not affect a specially enchanted item such as a scroll, magic ring, wand, rod, staff, miscellaneous magic item, magic weapon, shield or armour'; the DMG makes it clear that this is not so. Although dispel magic is an area spell, the caster can target it specifically at a magic item of the type listed, and the dispel may affect it for one round (items not in the possession of someone get no saving throw). In such a case, the dispel will not affect an area centring on the item. It may only be used as a targetted spell at the expense of the area effect.

Prayer: The DMG notes that this spell cannot be combined with **chant** unless one cleric casts the prayer while a second is already chanting. Both must also serve the same deity.

FIFTH LEVEL

Quest: Although the DMG states that there is a saving throw against this spell, if the recipient is the same alignment or religious persuasion as the spellcaster, and the quest is just or deserved, there is no saving throw (same religion) or a save at -4 (same alignment). Importantly, the DMG notes that a character agreeing to a quest gets no saving throw even if the agreement was obtained through trickery!

SIXTH LEVEL

Blade Barrier: Again, although the PH states that there is no saving throw here, the DMG makes it clear that any creature within the area of effect of the barrier when the spell is cast *does* get a saving throw, and if this is successful, no damage is taken. The PH also contains an error when discussing the limits of the barrier, because it triples the dimensions for the area of the spell outdoors, whereas only the range of spells is affected in this way. The upper limit is therefore 2" cubed (20' x 20' x 20').

Conjure Animals: Clerics have the option of conjuring various permutations of these (eg, a 12th level cleric could conjure 12x1HD, 6x2HD, 4x3HD, 3x4HD, 2x6HD or one 12HD animal) and clerical PCs of sufficient levels should know which types of animals are involved at different HD levels (although perhaps not the probabilities for specific animals within a HD level; this information would not be particularly useful anyway, since the caster cannot select creatures within the specific HD level). Players may fairly request some information on potentially callable creatures, and DMs may consider updating the tables using animals from the **Monster Manual 2** volume, and possibly the **FIEND FOLIO®** tome also.

Find The Path: The key word in the description is 'locale', and the DMG is slightly ambiguous here. PCs would be aware that one cannot use this spell as a souped-up **locate object**. The objects within a locale are meaningless within the vocabulary of the spell; a desire to find the path to a dungeon level where a mound of platinum pieces were located would only enable a dungeon level to be found — there may or may not be platinum there, the spell doesn't search for it. The DM has to ignore all parts of a description of an area which seem to be object-specific.

Word of Recall: If the sanctuary of the caster is on a different plane from that in which the caster is located, there is some chance that this spell will not work. PCs might only be aware that clerics using the spell disappeared from the alien plane, and did not arrive back home, but should have no idea of the percentages involved. They should know that this is a more serious problem on the Outer Planes than on the Inner.

SEVENTH LEVEL

Earthquake: Although the PH states that there is no saving throw, sturdy buildings may in fact take notably less structural damage than one might expect. Again, details are not given here since PCs should not know exact percentages involved. Also, if an earth elemental which is 'of forces opposed to the cleric casting the earthquake spell' is within the area of effect of the spell, the spell may have reduced efficiency or even fail totally.

Restoration: A detail omitted by the PH is that this spell will cure any and all forms of insanity. The DMG does not state whether one application of the spell will both cure insanity and undo an energy drain in the case of a character affected by both; by analogy with **heal** (which cures blindness and/or diseases *and* restores all but 1-4 lost hps) the multiple effect should be permitted.

DRUIDIC SPELLS

FIRST LEVEL

Detect Magic: See comments on the 1st level clerical spell of the same name.

Speak With Animals: See the 2nd level clerical spell of the same name.

SECOND LEVEL

Charm Person or Mammal: PCs should be aware that the ST for this spell is very strongly affected (for the worse from the druid's point of view) if physical or magical damage is visited upon the target by members of the druid's party when this spell is cast; the more damage, the less the chance of the spell working.

Heat Metal: Although the PH states that there is no saving throw, the DMG gives two notable exceptions. First, elfin chainmail is not affected at all by this spell. Second, magical armour has an extremely good saving throw and is rarely affected. The DMG is silent on whether magical rings, weapons, shields, etc are equally resistant — indeed, the note is specifically about magical armour. However, the DM is urged to consider extending saving throws to other magical metal items.

Lastly, the reverse of this spell — **chill metal** — should obviously be treated in the same way.

Warp Wood: The PH states that there is no saving throw against this spell, but PCs would be aware that magically treated wood (eg, a **wizard locked** door) is resistant to this spell in some cases. The DMG gives details.

THIRD LEVEL

Call Lightning: An important point only mentioned in the DMG is that half-strength bolts can be created even if weather conditions are not ideal — and even underground — if a (presumably friendly, or at least non-hostile) djinn or air elemental is within the spell range.

FOURTH LEVEL

Animal Summoning I: Players may not know that the DMG contains a long list of animals subject to this spell (again, this list might be updated by DMs with the animals in **MM2**). A druid PC would know from training and from his travels (being at least 6th level to be able to memorize this spell) some, if not all, of the animals subject to this spell, and players could reasonably expect a list from their DM. This does not mean that this spell would confer knowledge of which animals are within spell range, merely that the caster should have some idea of the spell's potential in a given location.

Call Woodland Beings: As for **animal summoning**, the DMG contains tables on what creatures may be found in different settings. Again, druid PCs might be ruled to know something about the likely possibilities.

Dispel Magic: See comments on the 3rd level clerical spell of the same name.

FIFTH LEVEL

Animal Summoning II: See comments on **animal summoning I** above.

Anti-Plant Shell: Neither the PH nor the DMG address a particularly important point; ie, is the spell mobile or not? It would appear that it is not, ie, the centre of the area of effect is the spot at which the caster cast the spell, and it does not move. See comments on **anti-animal shell** below.

ILLUMINATIONS

Parting is Such Sweet Sorrow

Sadly, O Readers, this is the parting of the ways. After 2½ years of combing the very depths for information about what was new in the world of gaming, this is your newscaster, Doug Cowie, signing off. I'm afraid that coping with the enormous success that Grenadier Models are having doesn't leave time to do my normal monthly round-up. It doesn't even leave time to do this month's column, which is why my normally lucid style is being copied by some ghost writer.

Right — wipe back those floods of tears and I'll tell you what's happening in new-product land. TSR, after a summer in which they were bringing out new role-playing games at weekly intervals, are firmly back on the modules and play-aids track. The next few releases for you fantasy buffs should be DL8 **Dragons of War**, CM5 **Snow Pearls** and the latest in the excellent UK series, UK7 **Dark Clouds Gather**. It might interest you to know that, after the **DRAGONLANCE**™ epic, the UK modules are the best-selling series both here and in the USA. Also coming, IJ5 **Nepal Nightmare** and MH7 **Last Resort** — and an item which nearly puts T2 into the shade, H1 **Bloodstone Pass**, a title this magazine advertised as a prize in a competition back in #14! This product is now the first supplement for the **BATTLE-SYSTEM**™ Fantasy Combat System. Don't be too worried about those poor competition winners, by the way — those impetuous devils at TSR UK have long since found something else to send them....

I didn't refer to T2 without good reason. Once more, the product schedules speak of this long-awaited tome. It might.... possibly.... perhaps.... have been released in the USA in August as T1-4, a complete repackage of the **Temple of Elemental Evil** adventure. Rather than put the kiss-of-death on it by stating that this means it will be in the shops by Christmas, we'll just leave it at that.

Due at the same time — CN2 **The Mercenary**, DL9 **Dragons of Deceit**, MHAC7 **Concrete Jungle**, IJ6 **The Fourth Nail** and TS007 (the number you've all been waiting for) the **TOP SECRET**® **Companion**.

Now onto the competition. Games Workshop have a large number of items fresh in from the USA, with the promise of more to come. **De-Luxe Car Wars** ought to have you spending from £0-19.95 in 60 seconds, and don't forget **Uncle Albert's Auto Stop & Gunnery Shop** for the loose change. **Paranoia** getting to you? The first supplement of the game in which the DM is *supposed* to lie to you all the time will be **Yellow Clearance Black Box Blues**. Three new **Star Trek** packages from FASA come with what looks like some sort of interesting cardboard insert.... but I can't work out what it's for. *Either* it's a Personal Defense Shield to keep the gamesmaster safe from the hail of rubbers and such that accompany a fifth straight hit, or it's utterly useless except for those shopkeepers with suspension racks. Anyway, the supplements are **Termination 1456**, **The Outcasts** and the **Romulan Ship Recognition Manual**.

ICE have brought out **Future Law** and **Character Law**, just about completing the **Rolemaster**™ system, while the **Pendragon Campaign** book starts players off on their great Quest to play through 300 years of epic history. Reviews of all these goodies will follow.

Games of Liverpool are stocking up retailers for the Christmas rush as well. A **Psi World** adventure, **Underground Railway**, and the **Daredevils** supplement **Lost World Tales** will provide much-needed support for those systems, while **Villains & Vigilantes** profits by no less than three adventures, **Terror By Night**, **Devil's Domain** and **Tackle The TOTEM**. And you needn't think that all you **Flashing Blades** fans out there are forgotten, because **Parisian Adventure** will be out soon, price £4.45.

GoL have also laid their hands on the **Harn** series by Columbia Games, which stirred up some interest when released a year or so ago. The boxed set will now be £13.95, **Cities of Harn** £8.50 and a new, boxed supplement, **Invinia** will appeal to those of you who enjoyed the Viking material in this magazine — because that is what this is all about. Copies of **Encyclopedia Harnica**, issues 3-15, are also available, now priced at just £3.95.

Well, that just about wraps it up; you can lose contol of your emotions now. From next month, most of this section will be absorbed by the Review pages, just to prove how indispensible I've been. If you want something to remember me by, rush out and hassle your local stockists for the anniversary Grenadier figure, due out on September 1st — a **Liver Bird**, sculpted by Andy Chernak in Philadelphia. Don't worry, he has had it all explained to him, and it shouldn't look like walking paté. More like an ostrich than a dodo, sizewise too — it'll be a bargain.

continued from page 39

SIXTH LEVEL

Animal Summoning III: See comments on **animal summoning I** above.

Anti-Animal Shell: The DMG states, which the PH fails to do, that unlike the 6th level MU spell **anti-magic spell**, this spell is not mobile.

Turn Wood: Unlike **warp wood**, when the PH states that there is no saving throw, this time it really means it.

SEVENTH LEVEL

Fire Quench (reversed **fire storm**): A useful piece of information only given in the DMG is that this spell is capable of destroying a **flame tongue sword**, unless the appropriate saving throw is made.

Carl Sargent

continued from page 12

of valuable goodies to boot!). Take, for example, the 'departed' himself. It could be that the party have need of some information from him (via **speak with dead**) before he is reduced to ashes, or perhaps he died at the hands of some nasty undead and must be treated in some special way to prevent him rising again as one of the same. It could be that the party are hired to recover the body from some dangerous place so that it can be disposed of properly. Alternatively, the suttee victim could be the centre of an adventure — a woman only charmed into taking the part of the willing victim, perhaps, or some polymorphed and fire-proof nasty out to nick the loot. Even the treasure itself provides possibilities with the tradition of killing (ie destroying) items before interring them. Who could stand by as a powerful sword goes to pot, when a fake could be substituted for it, and who knows what effects the ill-advised smashing of some magical items might have? Finally, a funeral is a time of high emotion for those involved, a time when NPCs might resort to strange and possibly dangerous actions.

Carole Morris

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EARTH WOOD

In EARTHWOOD, twenty-five players compete to be the ultimate ruler by controlling all the developed cities, either singularly or with an alliance. A typical game will last about 18 months with the first knockouts usually starting after six months.

Each player is either a king of a fantasy race or powerful charismatic character. Your character or king controls several groups each of which is totally independent of each other. You can recruit trolls, wildmen and others into your armies, and even control powerful creatures such as dragons. Your characters will capture and control cities, upon which you can spend gold to improve security, increase your workshop's production, build defences and maintain and enlarge your army. With gold your wizards undertake magical research, learning new spells. Spies search out enemy strongholds and then attempt acts of sabotage, theft and assasination. These are just a few options available to a player in EARTHWOOD.

EARTHWOOD is computer moderated but the turn sheets and replies are written in plain English so that you can easily understand them. No need to look through complex charts and code books to understand this game.

KJC GAMES

To enrol in Earthwood send £5.00 cheque/PO payable to KJC Games. For this you recieve the rulebook, setup and first three turns. Future turns are £1.50. Send to KJC Games, 5 Vicarage Avenue, Cleveleys, Blackpool, Lancashire. FY5 2BD.

AD&D®: The Bane of Llewelyn

C5: The Bane of Llewelyn is the second in a two-part module adventure package, following in the footsteps of **C4: To Find a King**. Both were originally developed for the AD&D tournament play at the GenCon XVI Convention. Where the earlier module failed to cope with both tournament and campaign play, I found C5 flexible enough to lend itself to the less restrained actions required for non-tournament play. Some may find C5 at first over-complex, but it is worth persevering. It is certainly possible for the module to be used in a campaign setting or even as an isolated adventure without C4.

After an 'historical' introduction (a recap of C4), adventurers face four scenarios comprising both dungeon-style and wilderness adventure settings. The scenarios form a tense legend-in-the-making, as the players try to bring an ancient prophecy to fruition by attempting to revive a long-dead king. The overall plot is the best part of the module, lending itself to an expansion by the DM (providing those niggling vestiges of tournament play are removed, such as 'This monster will not use such and such attacks or spells'!). Through the course of play, two new monsters and one new weapon are introduced; one of the monsters requiring careful handling by the DM.

C5 is above-average in conception, containing a lot of good ideas, even if at times one or two are over-dressed or underdeveloped. However, as the module stands, I believe it requires a change of character balance. I suggest 4-7 players with characters of 6-8th level, since one of the individual scenarios is especially tough for characters of low-medium level.

In C5, as in C4, various riddles and puzzles are frequent. Some of these are obtuse to say the least, suggesting that successful tournament play (in America) depends more on high IQ than on role-playing. I feel this is the wrong emphasis, but one that is not insurmountable in C5 when dealing with non-tournament play. On the whole the parts read well, although a couple of ambiguities do arise in the text. My strongest criticism concerns the poor map work: a number of maps are not labelled as the text suggests, and the final scenario lacks any useful map altogether — the DM must create one!

With a little work by the DM, C5 is one of the few modules that is worth placing in a campaign world that a DM has carefully nurtured. Although designed for a Celtic environment, it could easily be altered to suit other cultural interests, since the main themes are interchangeable. A good ideas module; and worth some creative thought on the DM's part. Not one to be played 'off the shelf'.

Mark Davies

GRENADIER

Don't be put off by the words **Official Bushido 25mm Miniatures** on Grenadier's latest bubble packs of figures. Grenadier have come a long way since the **AD&D Approved** figures. These new models are quite good enough to sell without the Bushido name.

There are twelve figures in all, three to a pack. The surface detail, anatomy and animation on them all is more than adequate, and will present everybody with a real test of painting skill. The poses are convincingly studied (in the manner of Japanese combat), but not at all stiff and unnatural, and the whole feel of the figures is extremely pleasing.

However, most of the figures are cast with separate weaponry. This is fine in that it allows more details and individual variation, but joints always make the overall model a lot weaker. I am not so sure that these figures would stand up to heavy handling in a gaming session. The other criticism concerns the subjects chosen: no female figures of any description, and far too many Ninja types (7 out of 12 castings).

D&D®: Journey to the Rock

As plots go, this one is sound, if unoriginal in places. Lirdrium Arkayz (Ye Typecast Wizard) wants a party (the players' own characters or the eight provided) to bring him the Secret of the mysterious Rock. It's not *quite* that simple, of course — they've got to find the Rock first, then get into the thing, and finally work out just what it is they're looking for! The finding is made easier by the provision of a map, while the obligatory cryptic message from the wizard supposedly helps in working out the Secret. A nice touch is that the DM is provided with alternative endings, depending upon the party's condition.

The setting is unusual in that almost all the action takes place outdoors. The encounters provide plenty of good opportunities for role-playing ('wandering' monsters included) — it's not just a hack and slay job. Several very interesting new monsters are included, but even the more familiar ones are used in an imaginative way.

So far, so good... but there are negative points. The quality of production is rough in places, notably the DM's map: this is printed in green and yellow, with blue outlining and lettering which is difficult to read. I couldn't find area W3 at all, and W5 (which was there) wasn't much use without W4 (which wasn't). An attempt at economy? Forget it: even the players' black-and-white pull-out map is easier to read. Space is wasted by unnecessary reproduction of rules for wilderness play, and the English is very stilted in places — repetition in pursuit of clarity, one assumes. There is also a misprint on page 12 — substitute N5 for N3.

On the whole, this adventure compares favourably with the rest of the 'B' range. Tips for linked adventures are included, and these are quite good. The fewer resources you let the PCs take along, by the way, the more exciting the adventure, and it's imperative that the DM knows the module backwards — some of the encounters are a bit involved.

Generally, this is a good buy, provided that you don't mind the odd rough spot.

Wendy J Rose

DRAGONLANCE™: Dragons of Ice

Here we go again, off into the land of Krynn to start the second book of DragonLance, **Tales of Winter Night**. Those of you who have been playing one of the pre-generated characters from the first book may be disappointed to find that you take no part in this story. But don't worry; your time will come... For after **DL4: Dragons of Desolation**, the saga divides into two sub-plots with the surviving party members from the first book separating into two parties. The second book covers the adventures of one group, with the others reappearing in later modules.

Whatever your taste in surroundings when adventuring, this module has something for you. There's a number of town sections, a wilderness section and a castle/dungeon section. For me, the town sections work the best. With plenty of scope for improvisation (the towns being fully populated and the players free to wander around as they please), the DM can make this section as brief or as long as desired. Plot information can be fed to the players whenever appropriate. For the wilderness section there is an excellent map on which the course of the characters may be plotted. Unfortunately, here the number of choices open to the players becomes limited as they are encouraged to follow a specific course of events.

For my players, who enjoy making a very cautious and thorough exploration of dungeon rooms, the castle section is too brief and lacking in any real challenges. However, the DM can always improvise, using the module description as the central theme and adding extra rooms or problems to extend the sections.

My only real criticism of this module is its ending... There isn't one! Play continues straight on into the next module with no real conclusion to DL6. This can be a little difficult if you have not got DL7 in hand. On the plus side there's a lot going for it. Although it's the second book of DragonLance, it is not a requirement that you have played any of the first book. The splitting of the original characters into two groups and the introduction of some new people adds freshness to the series for those who have run all preceding modules.

On the whole, this module is well worth playing — but wait until you have DL7 before finishing it!

Alan Mynard

MODELS

The **Fantasy Lords** range of bubble packs is also well worth a look, although some of the sets are only re-issues of the old AD&D Approved figures. Most, however, are excellent with fine surface detail and reasonable animation. Sets 125-130 are typical of the whole range, with a useful pack of nine familiars and homoculi (127), including a quasit, cats, ravens and owls! These are figures that have been needed for a long time. The skeletons are also good in their bony little way, even down to the stiffy orcs being (slightly) anatomically different and the ex-horse looking suitably weird. For those currently indulging in the DRAGONLANCE™ modules, the Armoured Dragon Men are a must, resembling (mere coincidence as it is) the draconians. Good castings too.

My only grumble is with St George & the Dragon (set 128). 'St George and the Pretentious Iguana' would have been closer to the truth; but both figures, especially the iguana, are beautifully detailed.

Overall: Tick, VG, and recommended, for both Bushido and Fantasy Lords.

Mike Brunton

BATTLESYSTEM

In any fantasy campaign that involves a struggle between the forces of good and evil, it is quite possible that sooner or later armies are going to take to the field to fight for their respective causes. And this can give a DM problems — what to do when there is a battle to be fought? One recent answer was provided by the War Machine section of the **D&D® Companion Set**, but now TSR has come up with something better — **Battlesystem**.

This is a package designed to enable you to resolve any fantasy battle that a D&D or **AD&D®** campaign might generate, and is compatible with both systems. It contains the following: the vital rulebook, of course; 801 die-cut counters in case you don't have metal figures; a set of army roster sheets; a booklet of ready-to-play scenarios; a booklet guide to figure-painting; two player-aid cards with the most-used tables on them; two metal figures; and several sheets of cardboard cut-out scenery of the sort you used to get on the back of shredded wheat packets.

Battlesystem, despite its counters, is essentially a set of figures wargames rules comparable to **Chainmail** or **Warhammer**. It is a fairly simple system compared to most wargames rules, which is appropriate to the D&D games with their emphasis on role-playing rather than intricate mechanics. Indeed, the great strength of Battlesystem is the way in which it integrates the actions of individual player characters with the course of the battle. Thus it is quite easy for a party of adventurers to arrive on the battlefield, join in, and then depart again in the course of a game. The rules are fairly easy to use, although there are some omissions and rules buried in odd places, so some house rulings will be necessary.

While no self-respecting DM will want to be without the Battlesystem rules, I have some reservations about the rest of the package. The roster sheets, player-aid cards and scenarios are of course vital, but though I find the counter sheets ideal (apart from the fact that one of them is misprinted on the back) anyone who already has a large collection of figures will find them superfluous. The two metal figures are also quite unnecessary, and anyone with any experience in figure painting may object to having to pay for a beginners' guide to the subject. Nor can I imagine anyone really wanting all those cardboard cut-outs — they don't go well with the counters, and there are much better alternatives for figure gaming.

But on the whole, Battlesystem is to be welcomed, and may provide a good introduction for many to the world of fantasy wargaming.

Roger Musson

TWILIGHT 2000: Free City of Krakow

In the year 2000, Krakow is much like Casablanca in 1942: fiercely defending its neutrality. Dimly-lit bars serve as contact points for a string of agents of various warring countries, who spend their time following each other and mixing with the various factions in the city. Add to this **Twilight 2000**'s usual mix of deserters, marauders, half-starving refugees, and the Polish 8th Motorised Rifle Division (dedicated to keeping the others out of the city) and you have a melting-pot of plots, intrigue, violence and gaming possibilities.

Like **Escape from Kalisz** in the original Twilight set, **Free City of Krakow** is not so much an adventure as a campaign setting. The valley from Oswiecim to Uscie Solme is detailed in the same way as the towns in Kalisz, but in Krakow itself the module goes into much more detail, covering the rival leaders in both the military and merchant groups and several other 'interesting citizens' (translation: spies).

To tempt the group into Krakow (apart from the resupply possibilities), the scenario 'Operation Reset' offers them papers which virtually guarantee that they'll want to contact one or more of the secret services — and if you're trying to contact one, all the others will be interested in you, and once involved in one set of intrigues the group will soon be drawn into others.

As with the rest of Twilight, this module is strictly for the GM who can think fast and keep the atmosphere tense in a fast, fairly unpredictable game. This time, rather than setting up the situations as the group reaches them, the GM's job is the more difficult one of keeping a scenario running entirely on hints, snatches of conversation, brief sightings of familiar faces, lots of unrelated incidents and plenty of red herrings, and even running two or three plots simultaneously. And to give the GM an idea of how many options there are in any scenario in Krakow, there are 19 one-to-three paragraph ways for Operation Reset to develop.

Sales of Krakow will be hurt by the hefty price tag demanded by importing and the difficulty of running it, but if you are a GM who can run this sort of adventure well, this is an excellent module for a very good game system.

Chris Felton

Product information

C5: Bane of Llewelyn and **DL6: Dragons of Ice** are modules for the AD&D game; **B8: Journey to the Rock** is a module for Basic D&D; each costs £4.95. These, like **Battlesystem** (£14.95) — for both systems — come from TSR UK Ltd, The Mill, Rathmore Road, Cambridge CB1 4AD

Free City of Krakow is a module for the **Twilight: 2000** game from GDW, distributed in Britain by Games Workshop, 27/29 Sunbeam Road, London NW10. Price £7.95

The **Bushido** and **Fantasy Lords** ranges of figures cost £1.25 per pack from Grenadier Models UK Ltd (Im), 29 Grange Road West, Birkenhead L41 4BY

THE LONELY MOUNTAIN

This boardgame, for one to six players, simulates a raid by adventurers on the lair of Smaug the Dragon, inside Erebor — **The Lonely Mountain**. It is only loosely connected with *The Hobbit*, and by no means an essential buy for Hobbit fans. Players each control a party of treasure hunters whose aim it is to enter the mountain and grab treasure — slaying any monsters which obstruct them — and then to escape before Smaug traps them in the maze-like tunnels of his lair.

The 'board' (a folded sheet of glossy paper) is divided into rooms, each with one or more treasure sites, guarded by monsters. The monsters and their treasures are of random strengths, but there is a rough correlation between them — a party does not often fight a powerful monster for valueless treasure. As play progresses groups strengthen, until Smaug awakens — at this point players are advised to conclude any unfinished business rapidly, for Smaug systematically blocks the exits, trapping groups and forcing them through the exit that he himself guards. Players need to judge their party's escape bids carefully towards the end of the game, so as to gather as much treasure as possible without getting trapped. Treasures gained have 'victory point' values which are totted up to determine the winner.

On the box it says that the game can be played by people over 13 years old; this is quite a high age guideline (compared with 9 years for **Talisman**, for instance), but one which is justified by the level of complexity in the games' rules. This is a difficult game, and one which buyers should be prepared to stick at until learnt.

Unfortunately, the rules do not simplify things. The rulebook is set out into three sections: Basic, Standard and Optional game rules. The differences between the Basic and Standard rules are so minor that a simple page of 'upgrading' would have been better. In addition to this, the almost 'legal' style in which the rules are written make them hard going; and to make matters worse, the rules are so cross-referenced that the whole thing means nothing until each individual rule is scrutinised — at which point the whole thing either 'clicks', or remains incomprehensible!

Once the rules are mastered, the game plays surprisingly well. Quirks of fate require players to modify their plans constantly; this is not the kind of game in which decisions can be made without much thought. It plays excellently solitaire — this is the best way to learn how to play it — and the six player game, given as an optional rule (since the sixth player controls not a group of adventurers but the monsters), looks eminently playable. With more players, the game takes on a diplomatic element, as players gang up on each other, or cooperate to overcome strong monsters.

This is an American import, and for various reasons it has an extremely high price, not really justified by the physical components. Iron Crown Enterprises have come up with a good idea, combining a race against time with a wargame, but it is unlikely that I would choose to spend £17 on this game.

Andy Blakeman

TOON

Have an exploding cigar on me. As a rule I don't smoke but I need to calm my nerves. This scenario pack for **Toon** is destroying my grip on reality. What you get for your bucks is forty pages of zany humour, served up between colour covers depicting a giant cream pie launcher from Mars.

There are four scenarios: Fast Food Fracas (with food fight), Beach Nuts, or, No Sense Atoll (with cranberry sauce), Fangs for the Memory (with insurance salesman) and Mars Needs Creampuffs (with food fight, a very large one). The first two are Short Subjects, the others both Feature Film length. The Features will need a long play session to complete and could be split easily into two episodes, but this might ruin the pacing. But then Toon never does pace the way you planned it, so this nuance picked delicately from the text isn't really a criticism. Beach Nuts has several turkeys to go with the cranberry sauce, but it's unkind to tell the players that.

The four cartoons are full of classic

BLACK MORN MANOR

Boardgame of a rolegame of a pulp genre? Are you crazy? But **Black Morn Manor** *is* this; and it works. It is based on **Chill** (the RPG) and countless horror books and movies (the genre). The links with Chill are the character names and subject matter; there any similarity luckily ends.

For your money you get 48 colour board tiles, a deck of event cards, 6 character cards, a selection of evil master cards, a sheet of willpower and item markers, 6 plastic pawns, 2 dice and a rules sheet.

The game is set in the environs of a haunted mansion. Those playing *envoys* must first discover what is doing the haunting then destroy it by taking a bane item to the evil's haunt, a room in the mansion. The rest of the players are the evil master's *minions*, and must confound the envoys by removing the bane from the grounds. Envoys work as a team, and win together, while minions — initially one — win alone. It is quite possible for players to turn from envoys into minions or vice versa, and for the players to be all envoys or all minions would be a typical situation for this game (like the movies, this game can become almost ludicrous).

The board design deserves comment, as it is built up as you play. Each tile depicts a location you might find in a haunted manor (Lawn, Topairy, Chapel etc). They are rated from 1 to 10 according to their fright value. Envoys must roll over the given value to move across a tile without losing willpower (important, as on losing it all an envoy becomes a minion). Some tiles allow envoys to draw cards instead. Minions instead roll under the tile value when moving, and as they have no willpower, always draw a card. Placing tiles becomes very tactical, while event cards have unpredictable results. This strikes a happy balance between chance and skill, almost fine enough to make this a top-notch game.

Cards in play depend on the nature of the haunter, of which there are ten, all classics of the genre. Two of these also haunt the manor with a 'friend', who occurs as an event card nasty enough to frighten the life out of the most resolute envoys. Because of the master/event card relationship, you effectively have twelve variations on a basic game, chrome worth having.

The rules, only four sides long, are written with a dry, black humour. However they are not as clear as they are concise. The order of card play is ill-explained, with the rules contradicting instructions on most cards. Further, as the rules stand, the haunted room may never enter play; thus the game may last forever. Both these points have intuitive solutions, but mar what is otherwise an enjoyable game.

Matt Williams

Strikes Again

characters and events, like Bowser Schnauzer, the cute little puppy with a bazooka and a passion for dog biscuits. Mad scientists, vanishing cream, green martinis and dynamite all make their appearance. This is straight from the heart of Warner Bros and Bugs Bunny. Fans of drier cartoons like Wacky Races will have to wait until some other time.

These scenarios are all sandwiched between Toon additions, obviously thrown in as appetizers. There is a selection of cartoony things like Running Out of Gas, and some words to the Animator. To finish off there are a number of cartoon Stars to add to your Cast of Characters.

All this adds up to a feast of fun for Toon players, delightfully illustrated in addition. I'm not going to mince words here. Steve Jackson Games have cooked up a tasty side-dish for Toon, the game that gives a *carte-oon blanche* to the imagination.

That's all folks!

Matt Williams

Product information

The Lonely Mountain boardgame from ICE, £16.95; **Black Morn Manor** boardgame from Pacesetter, £17.95; **Toon Strikes Again** from Steve Jackson Games, £5.50; and **Legacy of EAGLEs** for the **Golden Heroes** game, £4.95, are all distributed by Games Workshop, 27/29 Sunbeam Rd, London NW10. These are recommended prices and may vary.

Thunder Over Jotunheim module for the **MARVEL SUPER HEROES™** game, £2.95; and **The Golden Goddess** for the **ADVENTURES OF INDIANA JONES®** game, £4.95, are TSR modules obtainable at your local hobby shop, or mail order from The Mill, Rathmore Road, Cambridge CB1 4AD

MSH: Thunder Over Jotunheim

Thunder Over Jotunheim is a solo module, starring Thor and such out-and-out nasties as Loki, Geirrodur, Ulik and the Executioner. It is a cross between an RPG and a board game, similar in style to the old SPI game **John Carter of Mars**. You get a large fold-out map of the Asgardian wilderness (not too pretty to look at, but functional) with area encounters, depicted as hammers, and linked by lines along with Thor can travel. As Thor lands on an encounter space, the player turns to the descriptive booklet to see what happens.

In the past TSR have used a system of Magic Marker pens which entailed long periods of whacking away at obscured text to render it readable. Thunder Over Jotunheim has improved on the system by obscuring the secret paragraphs with red dots; a tinted piece of plastic is enclosed which when placed over the dots makes them vanish, allowing you to read whatever's underneath. Quick, simple, and it allows others to use the module when you've finished.

And the plot? Well, Odin's vanished, as he tends to do with monotonous regularity, leaving Thor to handle the latest crisis in down-town Asgard. Good old Loki has been up to his usual tricks, this time 'borrowing' a magical sword that had belonged to Frey (that well-known Reaper of harvests). Thor is told that without the sword, Asgard is extremely vulnerable to sudden attack (something I found hard to believe, but never mind) by hordes of Giants, Trolls and other down and out riff-raff. Never let it be said that it's an easy life being a thunder god! Thor is given a gift by Karnilla before setting out to retrieve the sword, and this provides a variable element to the adventure. There are six gifts to choose from, each of which can create a different story, so in theory one player can use the module six times before exhausting the possibilities. There are lots of encounters, albeit rather simple ones, and plenty of opportunities for accumulating KARMA. I managed to get quite a nice stack of it before having to hit anything.

Overall, I found the module an interesting experiment with solo game design, though not really very challenging in a role-playing sense. If you enjoy solo games, though, I think you'll find this one of the better ones around.

Rob Nott

GOLDEN HEROES: Legacy of EAGLEs

How nice it is to have an all-British product to review. Not that I'm fanatically patriotic, but with a British product I know that the people responsible will see what I have to say, and if they do not take any notice, I can go and nag them until they do! In the case of **Legacy of EAGLEs**, however, the Golden Heroes creative team can rely on being free from visitations because they have all done a pretty good job.

Although GH co-inventor Simon Burley wrote the scenario, I'm sure he will not mind me giving half the credit for the finished product to his editor, Albie Fiore. As well as acquiring artwork from two very capable comic artists, Brian Bolland and Kev Hopgood, Albie has presented the package in a polished and helpful manner. To start with, almost everything you need is provided, including beautifully produced map-sheets, fold-together cardboard figures and quick reference cards for each major villain. The plot narrative is surrounded by helpful hints for the GM, each one in a separate box connected to the appropriate part of the plot with a small arrow. The general presentation follows the pattern laid down in the GH rulebooks but without the plague of typos.

I'm also impressed with Simon's contribution. Legacy has been deliberately designed to help a group of players just starting a campaign. It does this by providing them with an opportunity of acquiring a lot of what they need to set themselves up as a nationally recognised superteam. Because GH is a campaign-oriented game Simon also gives hints on how to adapt the plot to your own campaign and use the events of Legacy in later adventures. Most of the plot is very good, the NPCs are decidedly non-cardboard, and the player-characters cannot win on brawn alone.

Mind you, I do have a few gripes. Firstly, it looks as if Albie was left with some space to fill. At the back you find a page of possible extra villains (all taken from the Supervisor's Book) and a rather skimpy suggested line-up for the legendary EAGLEs of the title. Two pages on the EAGLEs might have been better. Also I think the final encounter is handled poorly, leaving them feeling that they had no party in the victory and wondering why the EAGLEs could have been so stupid as to miss the trick.

Overall, however, a very encouraging product.

Pete Tamlyn

INDIANA JONES®: The Golden Goddess

Despite having been blessed with virtually every other rolegame gimmick under the sun, the **ADVENTURES OF INDIANA JONES®** game has also been deemed worthy of the Magic Viewer™ treatment. **IJ4: The Golden Goddess** is the second of the Magic Viewer solo adventures (the first was **IJ3: Crystal Death**), consisting of a 16-page booklet, a large 'Rooftops of Marrakesh' and, yes, yet more Adventure Fold-Up™ figures to add to your collection — in this case, three people featured in the scenario, a crocodile, and a Seaplane!

The booklet is mostly composed of numbered blocks of text hidden behind red blobs. Through the viewer, a strip of translucent red plastic, the text 'magically' becomes visible. This technique is used to enliven what is actually quite a drab plot. Indy wants to recover the Golden Idol which Rene Belloq stole from him at the start of **Raiders of the Lost Ark**. He therefore journeys to Marrakesh, the likely location of the relic, and becomes embroiled in his customary non-stop daredevil adventure.

The adventure is set up in four episodes, which means that your choices will be rather contrived. Whatever you choose to do, you will tend to end the episode the way the designers want you to — to be prepared for the next. Even with this restriction, however, some strange things can happen. I began episode two in a tuxedo, dancing cheek to cheek with Marion Ravenwood, despite being covered from head to foot in bullet wounds! All in a day's work for Indy, I suppose.

The traditional numbered paragraph method is used, although with a few anomalies. There are occasional mis-references, and at one point I had Indy falling unconscious from the top of a building, and being unable to hit the ground because a loop in the text insisted that Indy would manage to grab one of a theoretically infinite succession of flagpoles — something clearly impossible for an unconscious man, even one of the calibre of Indiana Jones.

These minor quibbles aside, the adventure was remarkably short and dull. The roof-top chase over Marrakesh using a Magic Viewer map is a reasonable idea for changing the pace of the game and makes a break from squinting at indistinct red text, but it can drag, and it is easy to miss the whole affair if you make the 'wrong' decisions.

Solo scenarios are supposed to be designed for gamers who can't find other players. Quite frankly, if you can't find players you'd be better off spending your money on trips to the cinema than buying this module.

Paul Mason

letters.... letters.... letters....

letters.... letters.... letters....

Fantasy Media

*Neil Gaiman, author of **IMAGINE** short stories **Featherquest** and **How to Sell the Ponti Bridge**, and co-author of **Ghastly Beyond Belief**, reviews some more additions to the fantasy/SF media.*

Those of you who turned to this page first, anxious to see the pellucid prose and reasoned criticism of Dr Greenland, returned and refreshed after his American sojourn, instead of my own strange diatribes and unhealthy fascinations, will be disappointed. He won't be back until next month, so instead of Colin gritting his teeth and being fairly polite about **LEGEND** (20th Century Fox, PG) you've got me being awfully rude about it. Being a fantasy buff, I was fairly excited about the idea of a movie using today's special effects technology to do something serious about goblins, fairies, unicorns and demons; my enthusiasm began to wane thirty seconds into the movie, and went downhill from there. **Legend** is an expensive film, a visual feast, but an awful bore.

Tim Curry, made up as a demon, relives his role as Frank N Furter, playing the Lord of Darkness — an unpleasant dude who wants his goblins to kill two unicorns and thus bring eternal darkness to the world. However a forest person, a princess, a puck character named Gump, a tinkerbell character named Oona, and various others manage to frustrate his wicked will. The scenery, set design, make-up and effects are stunning; the story and the script stink, and Ridley Scot couldn't direct his way out of an Andrex commercial. At 95 minutes it seems like it must have been cut pretty drastically, and one can only be thankful. Glimmers of intelligence show here and there in the script, suggesting that William Hjortsberg probably had some idea of what he was doing when he wrote this — understanding that fairies are wilful, capricious creatures, for example — and he'll probably make a fairly good novel out of it, but if you go and see the film don't say I didn't warn you.

A big budget movie you'll probably all have seen by now is **A VIEW TO A KILL** (UIP, PG) which stars Roger Moore as a positively geriatric James Bond, and Grace Jones as May Day, with legs that go up to her ears. A millionaire industrialist wants to flood Silicon Valley and Bond saves the day. When Grace Jones went to bed with Moore, I was sure the producers had hit upon a way to kill the old fellow off with dignity, but when Bond was seen wandering around fresh as a daisy the next morning I realised how escapist this all is. Unless he just rolled over and went to sleep, of course, which is what I was strongly tempted to do.

Berry Gordy's **THE LAST DRAGON** (Columbia/EMI/Warner, PG) is a piece of enjoyable froth — a reasonably funny Kung Fu musical comedy with superhero resonances and fantasy overtones. Will black Kung Fu whizz 'Bruce' Leroy find The Master, defeat wicked Eddie Arcadian, beat Sho-Nuff ('The Shogun of Harlem'), rescue the lovely Laura (Vanity), outsmart the jive-talking Chinese fortune-cookie people, and learn how to get down and boogie? Very probably.

Video brings us the brightest light on this month's visual horizon, with Charles Band's wonderful **TRANCERS** (Entertainment, 15). Jack Deth is a future cop in Angel City, which stands near where LA is now, a few hundred years in the future. He's hunting down the zombie-like 'Trancers', psychic slaves to this bod named Whistler, who has fled back to the present where he has started bumping off the ancestors of Angel City's ruling council. Deth goes back to get him. Entering the body of an ancestor of his, Deth slicks down his hair, puts on a trenchcoat, and goes off to singe him some Trancers. Funny, comic-book, and fun, I enjoyed it immensely.

On the book front, Volume Three of the 'Epic Shannara Trilogy' has surfaced. It's called **THE WISHSONG OF SHANNARA** (Futura, £4.95), and in it Terry Brooks rehashes the same **Lord of the Rings** ripoff he inflicted on the public in the first two books. A must for those who like fantasy trilogies with silly names.

TOP SCIENCE FICTION (Dent, £2.95) is 25 stories selected and introduced by the authors, who range from Aldiss to Wolfe. Some good, some not-so-good, and some dire. **THE GARBAGE CHRONICLES** (Allen, £9.95) by Brian (son-of-Frank) Herbert is one of the worst books I've read in years — it may have been meant to be funny, but I could well be wrong — and should be avoided as you would a rabid dog with a Cruise missile. One character is a transsexual, who at one point ponders 'the way Captain Jarvik stared at her laboratory-shaped breasts'. The mind boggles, but finds no adequate retort.

Book of the Month has to be Clive Barker's astonishing first novel **THE DAMNATION GAME** (Weidenfeld, £8.95): Faust meets the Zombies. Quite simply the most literate and disturbing horror novel I have ever read. This is the place that nightmares are spawned — read it at your peril, but read it you must.

Right. I'm going now. Next month you are back in the sensitive hands of C Greenland esquire. Good hunting.

Neil Gaiman

FANSCENE

Soapbox

*Last month, Pete Tamlyn kicked off the new fan coverage in **IMAGINE** magazine by asking what it was about the amateur side of the hobby – and zines in particular – that made them worth paying attention to. This month, **DAVID L STONE**, an active hobbyist, adds his thoughts:*

Maybe you've been wondering along the lines of "why bother with fanzines.... **IMAGINE** magazine does things so much better" Well, there is a point, even if it might not seem obvious at times. Fanzines are for filling in the gaps. If you think about it, **IMAGINE** magazine — like **DRAGON** magazine or **WHITE DWARF** — only come out monthly, so there are a lot of things which get 'missed out'. As Paul Cockburn said in #26, there is only a limited amount of space in a prozine, some of which has to be given over to the most popular forms of the most popular games. Slightly off-beat articles which don't quite quite make it into the prozines might not be any *worse* than those which get printed, but might not reach a large enough market, so — they go into the fanzines.

But that isn't quite the whole picture. Fanzines aren't just a source of alternative ideas for unusual games like the **Call of Cthulhu**, **Toon** or **INDIANA JONES**™ game. They sometimes go into areas which don't quite have any relevance to your Saturday afternoon dungeon trip. They have film reviews, music reviews, parodies of the professional magazines/games, parodies of each other, and even more bizarre sillinesses.

I expect most people could quite happily let this pass them by — much of it can be read in newspapers, *Private Eye*, film magazines, or whatever, where it is usually better written. But if you want something less clinical, it can be quite refreshing. Here is a good analogy: reading a professional magazine is like going to a lecture, or watching a TV documentary — it's very competent, and you come away feeling that those involved knew what they were talking about. Fanzines are more like conversation. They tend to be friendly, with more chat than lecturing. What's more, you can get involved! As most fanzines have circulations of less than 500, the editors can afford to be more interested in what *you* have to contribute, whether it be an article, a piece of art, or simply a letter saying what you thought of the magazine.

These are generalisations, as there are fanzines that have less personality than IMAGINE magazine, and many stick to providing useful mainstream material like scenarios, character classes and monsters for the D&D game. This just goes to show that there is a lot of variety to be found in fanzines, and — who knows — there might be one that is perfect for you. Don't be misled by what seems to be constant agreement among fanzine editors (I know people who have said that **Soapbox** always says the same things, and so it is probably written by the same person — neither is true). There isn't a big conspiracy of fanzine editors who all despise the D&D game and think they're better than everyone else. Believe me — I've talked to them at conventions — they all argue with each other quite a lot, none of them play the same games in the same way, and they're all quite friendly and prepared to talk (and listen). And you'll find that material for the AD&D game is pretty common in fanzines too....

These days it's much easier to find your way into reading fanzines. When I bought my first a few years back, I had nothing to guide me. I was at a convention and I saw a stand with what looked like scenario booklets — or something. I went up and had a look, and since I'd found a 50p coin in the lining of my jacket that morning, I thought I'd take a risk and buy a copy of **DragonLords** 2. After I figured out what this fanzine lark seemed to be all about, I decided I liked it.

You don't need to go through any of this, though — you have a copy of your own zine — **The FanScene** nestling in your copy of IMAGINE magazine. Think of **The FanScene** like a **gate** spell — it opens a portal to a weird and and magical plane. Thanks to **The FanScene**, you'll be able to find out what particular fanzines are like, and how to find out more about them. You can also read (and take part in, if you like) discussions and articles of the sort that might appear in some of the fanzines. With any luck, you'll change your views if you thought fanzines were pointless, and at the very least you'll know what you're missing if you decide that they aren't for you.

I recommend that you send off for sample copies of a couple of fanzines straight away (remember to include an SSAE). Try to get fanzines which specialise in different things — a 'chat' zine, a pure postal games zine, a 'hardware' zine — and you'll get an idea of the variety there is. It would be best if there was a service which sent a selection of fanzines to potential readers, but that's for the future. In the meantime, you'll have to shop around yourself.

One thing to remember, though, is that fanzines are usually published by one or more fairly ordinary people, who don't have vast piles of gold pieces to lavish on colour covers and typesetting and so on. The level of presentation you take for granted in IMAGINE magazine requires a budget that no struggling fanzine publisher, however dedicated, could afford. It can be a shock reading your first fanzine — I know it was for me when I picked up that strange booklet called Dragonlords 2. But don't let that put you off.

Finally, I should point out that I have been talking mostly about the role-playing fanzines, as this is the sort of thing I normally get. There are a whole bunch of postal game fanzines which I'm really not qualified to talk about, and which deserve a separate article anyway....

Dave Lee Stone

*If you would rather see some zines 'in the flesh' before you buy, then those of you going to **Games Day** on September 28/29 should note that there will be a Zine Stall in the Main Hall. Consult your programme.*

FELLOWSHIP OF THE ZINE

STAR ZINE

LANKHMAR STAR DAILY was originally a vehicle for Rob Nott's **Lystria** campaign — a postal (and face-to-face) fantasy RPG. This campaign finally folded when it became too much for Rob to handle, so issue 9 of LSD saw the introduction of the **2112** postal fantasy game, along with a large supplement detailing the new rules system.

Now, having reached issue 17, LSD still runs 2112 with some 40 players, and it is a game which has influenced and been the inspiration for several other campaigns and zines (see **Danse Macabre** and **Zadragorzette** below). The magazine offers much more than just a game report for 2112, however, as Rob wants to balance the 2112 material against articles and games for those of his subscribers who do not play 2112. This balancing act he has done very well, I feel, as the zine has much to offer to a lot of different people.

So, what does a typical issue of LSD offer? I don't think that there is really an issue's contents which could be called typical, but Rob manages to pack an incredible amount of material into the 44 pages he has limited himself to. Thus, apart from the 2112 section Belladona, there are always plenty of zine, book and film reviews, articles on all aspects of FRP games (from magic to psychology), and a number of 'standard' postal games such as **Diplomacy** and **Sopwith**.

I think the real thing which makes the zine appeal so strongly to me, however, is the atmosphere which fills it, and which is most evident in the letter column and the pieces of gossip and chat that Rob writes. Reading the letters is like standing in a pub and overhearing a lot of very good friends discussing everything under the sun; it is a friendly and relaxed chat, no-one gets too serious. What makes the LSD column particularly appealing is that unlike other zines' lettercolumns, you feel you could easily enter the discussions at any time, and be made very welcome. While the same names and the same group of friends do appear each issue, it is without the cliquey in-crowd feel some zines seem to revel in. LSD really is one of the friendliest zines I have come across.

Not content with filling 44 pages with good material every five weeks, Rob has just launched a companion zine to LSD to hold the overflow; called **Kayleigh** (Rob is a big Marillion/Genesis/Martini fan!). The first issue has an interview with Fish of Marillion, discussions and some openings for new games. You have to sub to Kayleigh separately, but for 60+ pages of material altogether, it has got to be worth it!

So, if you want to become involved in a friendly zine which offers interesting games, enjoyable articles, and the chance to join in discussions on anything from music to homosexuality, then LSD should suit you perfectly!

The number of new zines seems to be slowing down slightly (sighs of relief from the reviewer), though this may only be because people are preparing their epic contributions to the fanzine world over their summer holidays.

Thus, as I lie here topping up my suntan (you didn't think we all worked in dingy offices in Cambridge — did you?) only three new zines rise from the pile.

The first of these, **OUT OF THE MIST...** is a new zine in name only, as the two editors, Richard Lee and Jason Kingsley, have combined their previous fanzines (which were **Shadowfire** and **Mystic Crystal** respectively) to form a new publication. The amalgamation of the two zines has worked very well, and I feel that OOTM1 is an improvement on both of the previous zines, with a personality of its own. The production standard is certainly very high, and the standard of contents place it among the top fanzines around. In order to give the magazine some form of identity, Jason and Richard have chosen the excellent idea of basing all scenarios, characters and articles in one world, that of Seaguard. A lot of fanzines seem to be adopting this idea, as IMAGINE magazine has Pelinore, but Seaguard looks like being a very interesting and fairly original world. Apart from Seaguard material, this issue contains a fair amount of fiction, and a scenario for Ringworld, a game which appears to be growing in popularity. Most people were impressed when Shadowfire 1 appeared, and I think they are going to be impressed by OOTM1 as well.

The Man In The Middle

So you want to run a game, eh?

In **IMAGINE magazine** #17-18, Mike Lewis — former editor of the most successful amateur fanzine to date, outlined the various steps required for those wishing to start their own zine. This article is for those who have made that decision already, but who may be about to discover a second, and equally tricky pitfall — running a postal game in that zine.

There are many attractions in running a postal game. Subscribers playing in the games are bound to be more committed to the zine than the casual reader, since they are getting more from it than the purple prose of the editor. The editor may feel the benefit of having a game deadline as a spur to actually get the zine produced. And it should hardly need stating that postal gaming is fun, both to play in and to run. But where do you start?

Let us consider the case of an editor who simply wants to run a standard game in their zine, say **Diplomacy** and **Railway Rivals**. Nothing can be easier. You already know that the game is both easily playable by post and popular, so why not just open a waiting list and start?

Well, it isn't as easy as that. I strongly advise anyone in such a position to speak to some people who are already running a few games; they should be able to fill you in on a few tricks of the trade. What are the most common problems? How can you avoid the easy errors? How much time does it take to GM a game and type up the results for publication? There are many things to consider before you start.

Even more important will be the House Rules you prepare. Every experienced gamer knows that the rules of all games do not cover every eventuality, and many leave well-known inconsistencies, particularly exposed when it comes to postal play. These are filled in by the House Rules, which you will need to have ready to circulate among your players at the launch of the game. One area the House Rules must cover is what happens when a player NMRs (fails to send in a turn's orders or moves), goes out of credit or sends order which arrive late through no fault of the player. It is generally best if your House Rules are fairly strict, leaving you the option of being lenient to individuals — this should leave you covered for most eventualities.

If you are thinking of running a more offbeat game, more research will be required; just because you haven't heard of anyone playing postal Advanced Ludo, or found a reference to another zine running it in **20 Years On**, don't despair. Over the last 15 years, an incredible range of games have been attempted by post, and while it is fair to say that the majority of

ORACLE OF ALMOST ALL KNOWLEDGE is also a first issue, and the difference made by experience is clearly shown when comparing it with OOTM. The zine is rather scrappily laid out, with articles tending towards rules additions to the **D&D** and **Traveller** games. The contents are of a reasonable standard but all the articles are far too short to actually convey much information (one of the hazards of using unreduced text in an A5 size zine).

DANSE MACABRE is a new postal games zine, which is obviously heavily influenced by LSD (the zine!) as Rik mentions Rob Nott at nearly every opportunity. The main zine features some short articles on RPGs, letters (a little unusual for a first issue), and an appraisal of Stephen King's books. The games on offer include **Call of the Cultists** (a Cthulhu-based card game), The Thing (based on the John Carpenter film), The Irving Strikes Back (an original card game), and postal James Bond. The other major game is a postal rpg which is detailed in a 24-page supplement to the main zine. The basis of the game is Call of Cthulhu, but Rik has set the game in a future where Cthulhu's minions have invaded and successfully conquered the Earth, and the players take the part of prisoners from the last remaining human prison. It looks very interesting, and provided Rik can maintain his enthusiasm for the game and zine, Danse Macabre should be an excellent place to play games.

BALROG BANTER has reached issue two, and is aleady showing signs of improvement, with the additions of a lettercolumn and a couple of discussion pieces balancing the three scenarios (for **Golden Heroes**, the **D&D** game and a solo adventure). The zine could do with some better artwork, and perhaps a little more thought in the layout, but overall BB2 is a very pleasing second issue.

FASTER THAN LIGHT is Alex Zbyslaw's postal gaming zine, which has replaced **JAWZ**. The idea behind FTL is to provide a low-cost, fast-turnaround gameszine, and Alex seems to be achieving this with issue 5 out already, running to a three-weekly deadline. If you are looking for a fast (and, it appears, reliable) place to play **Diplomacy**, **Origins**, **Civilisation**, **Railway Rivals** or **Empire**, then try FTL — you may get a copy of the chatzine **REVOLUTION** as well.

Another zine which has been influenced by Rob Nott's LSD is Mike Jacob's **ZADRAGORZETTE** — which is devoted to Mike's Zadragor campaign. The latest issue has undergone a change to double-column format, and looks a lot neater and more compact. Zadragor was based on Rob's 2112 rules, but Mike has decided to change the game system to that of **Chivalry & Sorcery**, so this offers all you C&S fanatics a chance to play the game postally. Apart from the games reports and background articles on Zadragor, there are the letters, articles on rpgs, **The Prisoner** and two new games on offer. The first of these, **Rock'n'Roll**, was originally run in LSD, and offers the opportunity to control your own rock group, while **Pubs'n'Poseurs** is all about being hip and trendy! A new game is offered for next time as well, this being **Konkordium**, an SFrpg based on the **Ringworld** rules.

NEXT STOP JUPITER is (the ubiquitous) Jez Keen's chatzine, and issue 3 comes with an intermediate zine **SPREADSHEET 4** and Andy Blakeman's subzine **PARTY**. The main magazine carries a piece on Intelligence in rpgs, Fully Automatic Firearms, Shadowplay — a scenario for the D&D game, and a fair amount of reasonable fiction. Spreadsheet carries letters and fanzine reviews (some 31 zines are covered in this issue alone, a guide to just how many postal fanzines there are around!), and Party offers several postal games and more of Andy Blakeman's unique views on fandom and life in general.

The **SCAN SUMMER SPECIAL** sees a reduction to A5, but a colourful cover and excellent contents make up for the smaller size. This issue carries on the Scan tradition of satirical strips like Dan Dire — the pilot with no future — and the Trans-Mechanos (a brilliant takeoff of the Transformers). Add to this an article on training orcs, Glipman, and the Thing From Basingstoke, and you have an issue which you'll only hate if you haven't got any sense of humour.

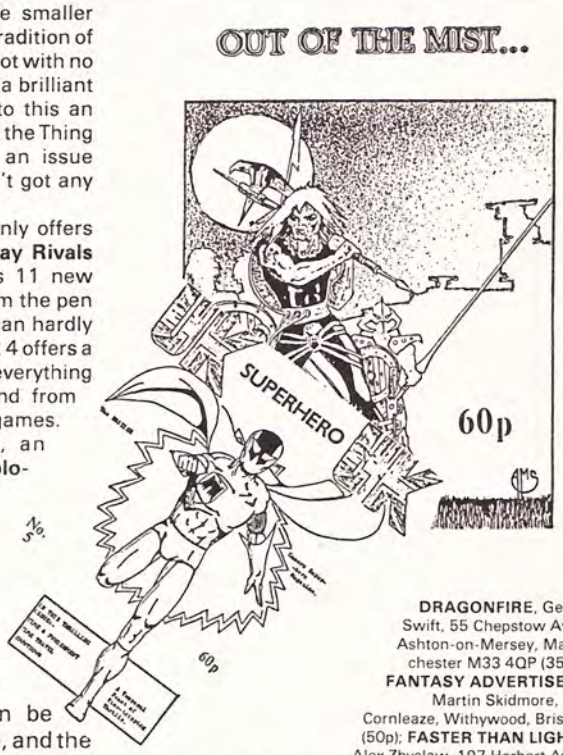
TAKE THAT YOU FIEND! not only offers the usual mix of **En Garde!**, **Railway Rivals** and **Title Bout**, but this issue has 11 new 'official' **Tunnels & Trolls** spells from the pen of Ken St Andre himself! I bet you can hardly wait to see it! **PRISONERS OF WAR** 4 offers a massive 52-page zine, which covers everything from letters, to trips to Russia, and from Record and Play Reviews to postal games. The latter include **Touchdown**, an American Football simulation, **Diplomacy**, **El Nabisco** (a Western game), **North West Frontier, What!** (set in India, of course), **Sopwith** and many more. POW is an excellent place to play a wide variety of games; it is efficient, beautifully produced and incredible value for money — what more do you want?

MASTERS OF THE PRIME is still running fairly efficiently, despite Bryan's change of address and job, etc. It offers **En Garde**, **Diplomacy**, **Ace of Aces** and **Judge Dredd** as well as plenty of chat about books and comics.

Finally, a few words about ordering fanzines. I know some people expect to get the zine back immediately, and you should receive any zine you have ordered within a few weeks of sending for it, at least. However, you have to realise that editing a zine is not a professional job, and that your order might be delayed by all sorts of problems, especially if the latest copy of the zine is Out of Print, and the editor is waiting for the next one to appear — probably just as impatiently as you are! Make some allowances for delay; but if you still haven't heard from a fanzine you have ordered and you feel it has been a long time, I am quite willing to help you out, as I am in touch with most of the zine editors on a regular basis.

One such delay was the result of a misprint in this column: apologies to Andrew Thompson of **Combat Is Glory**, and any subscribers whose orders went astray. Andrew lives at 53 Parolles Road, Archway, London N19 3RE.

Zines Reviewed by Mike Lewis



DRAGONFIRE, Geoff Swift, 55 Chepstow Ave, Ashton-on-Mersey, Manchester M33 4QP (35p); **FANTASY ADVERTISER**, Martin Skidmore, 25 Cornleaze, Withywood, Bristol (50p); **FASTER THAN LIGHT**, Alex Zbyslaw, 197 Herbert Ave, Poole, Dorset BH12 4HR (40p); **GREATEST HITS**, Pete Birks, 65 Turney Rd, London SE21 7JB (50p); **HACKING TIMES**, Dylan Harris, Greenwich Young Liberals, 76 Haddo House, Haddo St, Greenwich SE10 (50p); **HOPSCOTCH**, Alan Parr, 6 Longfield Gardens, Tring, Herts (55p); **LANKHMAR STAR DAILY**, Rob Nott, Flat 3, 6 Bradburne Rd, Bournmouth, Dorset (60p); **MAD POLICY**, Richard Walkerdine, 144 Stoughton Rd, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6PG (40p); **MASTERS OF THE PRIME**, Bryan Betts, 2nd Floor Flat, 133 Grosvenor Ave, Highbury, London N5 2NH (40p); **NEXT STOP JUPITER**: Jez Keen, 1 Glenfield Rd, Stockport SK4 2QP (45p); **NMR!**, Brian Creese, 256 Canbury Park Rd, Kingston on Thames, Surrey KT2 6LG (45p); **ORACLE OF ALMOST ALL KNOWLEDGE**, Curruthers, 6 Maryhill Close, Kenley, Surrey CR2 5HU (57p); **OUT OF THE MIST**, Jason Kingsley, 72 Main St, Osgathorpe, Leics LE12 9TA (60p); **PRISONERS OF WAR**, Wallace Nicoll, 228 Kinell Ave, Cardonald, Glasgow G52 3RU (60p); **SCAN**, John Freeman, 126a Greaves Rd, Lancaster, Lancs LA1 4UW (£1.50 for 3); **SUPERHERO UK**, Simon Burley, 20 Honeswode Close, Handsworth, Birmingham 20 (50p); **TAKE THAT YOU FIEND**, Kevin Warne, 48 Boscombe Ave, Hornchurch, Essex RM11 1JG (35p); **TAURUS** (Twiqu), Graham Staplehurst, 62 Church Rd, Harlesden, London NW10 (?); **ZADRAGORZETTE**, Michael Jacobs, Elm Lodge, Sylvan Way, Bognor Regis, W Sussex PO21 2RS (50p).

these have been failures, even unsuccessful attempts give you a starting point. There are several people you could write to for information about less well-known games. One source is the **Diplomacy Variant Bank**, now run by Geoff Kemp, a collection of Diplomacy variants which have been collected over the years (predictably, the definition of a variant Diplomacy game is loose, and there are several which I would call independent games in their own right). The 'older' hobby members can also be useful. Richard Walkerdine has a collection of all the Diplomacy Zines ever printed, which can be used for reference, while Steve Doubleday has a prodigious knowledge of postal gaming which could be yours for the investment of a few stamps.

If the worst comes to the worst, you will have to start from scratch and make up your own rules for your postal game. The first problem will be how to cope with the simultaneous printing of the results, closely followed by format in which orders are to be presented. Don't try for too much detail. If the orders can be written down on less than a page, and the game report represents less than a third of your zine, you are probably working along the right lines!

Once you have a draft of the rules, go through them over and over again; show them to anyone interested who might be able to spot a problem; run a few dummy turns with friends before you start charging people to play, and never be afraid to make changes as time goes by. Most of the established games have rules which have evolved via many people over many years.

Brian Creese

BALROG'S BANTER, Paul Evans, 22 Five Fields Rd, Willenhall, W Midlands (50p); **DANSE MACABRE**, Richard Rowe, 41 Methuen Rd, Bournemouth, Dorset BH8 8ND (60p);

Clubs

ALLOA, Clackmannan: Allies in Combat, Elven King Snamir Shadowest of Wuzara and Jarak the Barbarian require other role-playing adventurers, male or female, aged 14 up. Contact Stuart Robertson, Helensfield Poultry Farm, Bungalow No 2, Clacks; or Darrow Wilson, 56 Hill St, Alloa (tel Alloa 723931)

CHARD, Somerset: Denise Fieldhouse (age 18) has not yet found a local FRP group. Please write to 37 Lower Touches, Chard, TA20 1NY if you can help.

CUPAR, Fife: Group seeks experienced players and DM. Tuesdays and Fridays, 7pm. Write for more information: Michael Wynd, 15 Tarvit Avenue, Cupar.

ENFIELD, Middx: Wafflers Anonymous claims to be a serious society, 'open to all waffle addicts, regardless of age or experience'! The organisation offers penfriends, and a newsletter. Send one A4 piece of paper full of waffle and one SSAE to Wafflers Anon, 28 Merryhills Drive, Enfield.

HARROW, Middx: Biker, 25, plays SF and Fantasy RPGs, and skirmishes, **Starfleet Battles** and **WRG Ancients** in 15mm. Phone Glenn, 01 863 4284, or write: 28 Roxborough Park, Harrow on the Hill, Middx

HONG KONG: Phoenix Gaming Society. Any age, female or male; you play it, we play it. Mondays 4-6pm. Contact Kevin on 5-517782

LANCASTER: Adult players (18+) of any experience wanted for friendly, non-sexist and intelligent new **AD&D** campaign. Also **RuneQuest III, MERP, CoC** and **Rolemaster**. Ring Paul, 67009

LEICESTER Games Club meets every Monday, 7.30-11pm, near London Road BR Station, to play most RPGs and a good stock of board games. Interested parties must be over 18. For further information contact Chris Greaves, 53 Wanlip Lane, Birstall.

LONDON WC1: Kingsway Knights FRPG club plays **AD&D**, also **Dragonroar, Call of Cthulhu**. Free admission for 3 weeks, then 25p a week. Wednesdays 6-10pm, at Kingsway Princeton College, Sidmouth St. Any age. Contact Lawrence Keogh, 36 Fernhead Rd, Lydford Estate, London W9, Tel 01 969 2746

MARKET DEEPING, Lincs: DM/player (14) wants to start/join club for **Basic/Expert D&D** in Market Deeping, Deeping St James area. Phone Richard on Market Deeping 344175 6-9pm weekdays.

PORT SETON, E Lothian: David McLean is looking for an **AD&D** club in his area. Write to him at 4 Links Place, Port Seton, EH32 0TP.

PRESTON, Lancs: New club runs various RPGs, boardgames, wargames and 'live' fantasy adventures. Ave age 18. Novices and challenges welcomed. Pete Thompson, 60 Beechwood Ave, Fulwood, Preston PR2 3SE has details. Tel 0772 729647

ST NEOTS, Cambs: St Neots Adventurists Fantasy Unlimited (SNAFU) meet every Tuesday, 8pm at The Canon Public House, New Street, St Neots (over 18s only). D&D, AD&D, MERP, CoC, Bushido; willing to learn, willing to teach — Ken Ralph

WREXHAM, Clwyd: AD&D player (27) new to Wrexham seeks club or other players in Wrexham, N Wales or Chester area. Tel Roy on 0978 841058

Events

Last mentions for **CAMCON** and **CONQUEST**, both 13-15 Sept, in Cambridge and Hastings; **GAMES DAY** in London, 28-29 Sept; **ARTICON** at Hatfield Poly, 4-6 Oct. See back issues for details.

For next year's diary: **ALBACON III**, Glasgow, 28-31 March 1986. Details from Vince Docherty, 20 Hillingdon Gdns, Glasgow G52 1PR. More clubs/events information next month... *Kim Daniel*

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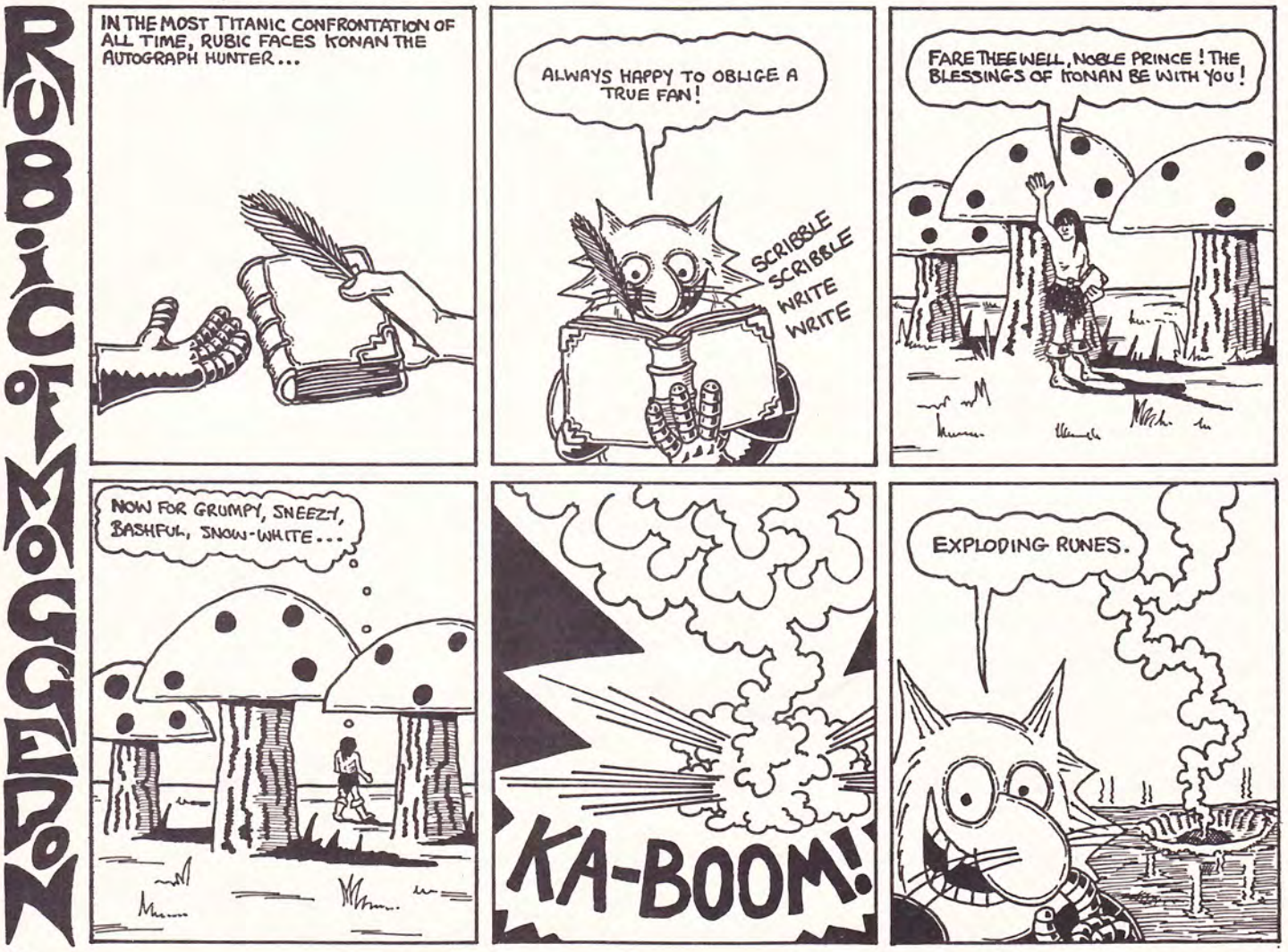
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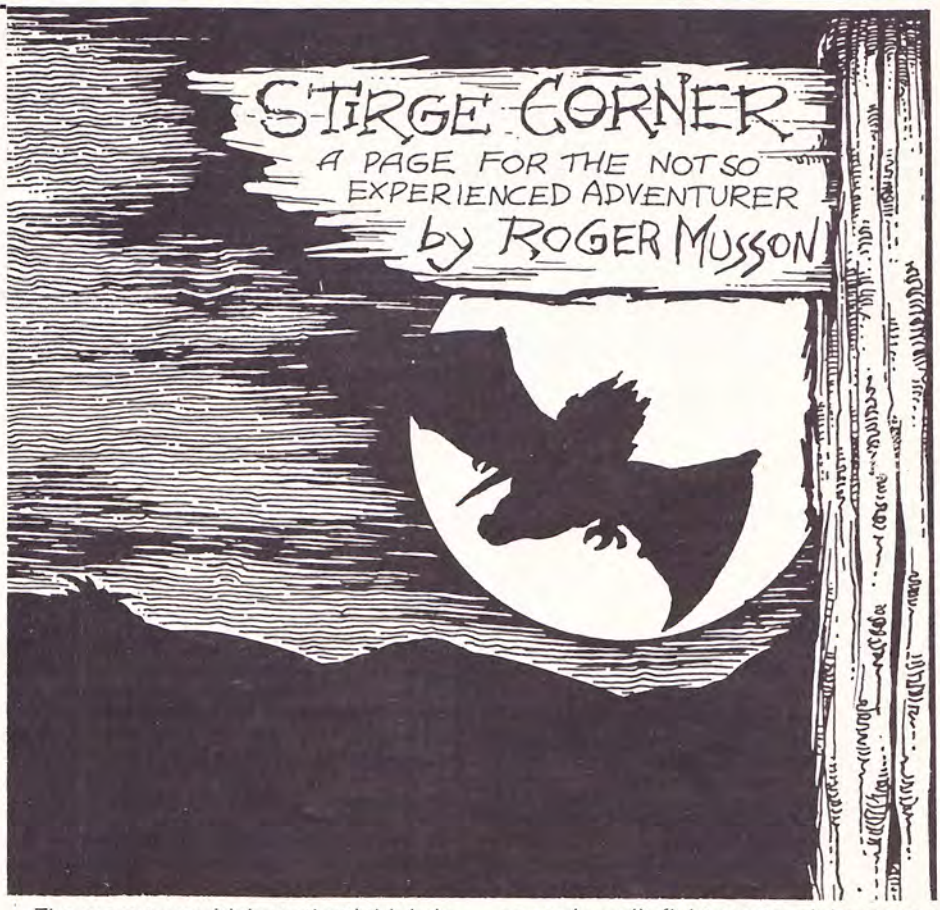
NOW FOR GRUMPY, SNEEZY, BASHFUL, SNOW-WHITE...
KA-BOOM!
EXPLODING RUNES.

The D&D® combat system is distinguished by its simplicity; but it could have been simpler if the designers had realised that AC2 + 2 = 0 is a touch confusing!



Because the nature of role-playing games is so very wide, it is often necessary to make up rules to cover new events. This has given many DMs the taste for modifying the existing rules to suit their particular campaign. There is nothing really wrong with this, as long as the players always know where they stand. But it can lead to problems if you have a fluctuating group of players — whenever a new one turns up they have to be taught the ropes, whereas a campaign run to standard rules can slot in anyone at once.

Of all the different aspects of the D&D rules, it seems to be the combat system that comes in for the most revising. I've hardly met a single DM who hasn't tried some variation on it at some time or other. So having discoursed last month on fighters, this month I shall say a few words about what they do — combat.

The first thing to emphasise is that the D&D combat system is distinguished by being in essence about as simple as it could be while still giving some sort of flavour and excitement. I say "in essence" because it could have been simpler had someone at TSR realised that AC2+2 = 0 is a touch confusing! A friend of mine once experimented with an even simpler system where you just calculated a character's chance of killing an opponent, rolled the dice, and applied the result. The players rightly objected that this gave them no control over the course of the fight, and even if it were assessed that their chance of dying were a mere 1%, they still didn't like it — sooner or later that 1% would turn up.

Thus, most revisions of the combat system tend to complicate it. The more that gets added, generally, the more it slows down. This can deteriorate to the extreme that you get with first edition Dragonquest rules, where the simplest melee can take a whole evening to resolve. Most people who play RPGs are more interested in role-playing and adventuring than the detailed mechanics of hand-to-hand combat, so a system like that in the D&D game which gets the fighting over and done with quickly has a lot to recommend it, particularly if it can still put in a bit of excitement.

The revisions that folk make stem from a number of criticisms of the existing rules, some of which are justified, others less so. For instance, one objection is that there is no hit location — blows just take off these vague things called hit points. I rather agree with Gygax about this — the soul of FRP is not really wandering around limbless, as seems to happen a fair bit in **RuneQuest**.

There are two criticisms that I think do merit attention, though. One is that the existing combat system very much favours those coated in platemail, yet most fantasy heroes survive perfectly well with a loincloth and a lot of dexterity. There are various ways of countering this (assuming you wish to). One is to give fighters who wear no armour much higher defensive bonuses for their dexterity than is standard. I have experimented with the equation *AC = 20 - dexterity* for unarmoured trained fighters, with some success.

The other approach is just to discourage armour in subtle ways. After all, a man in full plate is pretty cumbersome, and could have a lot of trouble trying to get about down a dungeon — forget anything that involves jumping or climbing, for starters. Also, bear in mind that a suit of armour was the mediaeval equivalent of a tank, and the prices were not dissimilar. If you increase the prices of armour drastically, you will be historically accurate, and it will also have the effect of making a simple breastplate into something of a treasure.

Of course, if you do this, it will very much restrict the opposition that your player characters will be able to encounter safely. Prepare to play a game of orcs and goblins rather than hydras and giants.

The big problem with combat in the D&D game is the hit point system. Losing hit points represents both getting tired in combat and getting wounded. But although you lose them at the same rate that you would get tired, you regain them only at the rate that you would recover from wounds. This is not just unrealistic, it is also awkward. It means that a fighter can only really fight one tough battle on a trip with any safety. One long combat with a giant, and Alberic the fighter may be down to the last few hit points. But this may represent only one wound and a lot of exhaustion. Given a rest, he should be able to recover sufficiently to continue the adventure, but under standard rules he is unfit for action for a long time before he regains his strength. This means that parties which have any ambitions tend to need a lot of healing, either from spells or healing potions.

The best cure for the problem is to change things so that hit points represent only fatigue, and actual wound points are a separate tally. Most damage is taken off as hit points, until these are all gone, and then the real wounds are inflicted; also, a good blow (say, on a 20) will cause wound damage in addition to hit point damage. Variations on this theme are used by both RuneQuest and DragonQuest, and this is one time I think the little extra effort pays dividends.

Alternatively, as long as you are aware of the problem, you can take more conventional steps to counter it. One idea is to introduce some local herb which is fairly easily available and functions as a limited healing potion, just to keep parties going, especially small parties with only a couple of fighters. Remember, you want to keep the adventure moving, not slow it down with frequent excessive recuperation periods.

Roger Musson

You can find further advice for new players in back issues of IMAGINE magazine, available from TSR UK Ltd, The Mill, Rathmore Rd, Cambridge at the price of £1 per issue plus 50p P&P per order.

TURNBULL TALKING

As I write, the English summer is upon us, and even though it takes me a few hours to finalise this column, it may well still be summer by the time I've finished.

Regrettably, there's not much gaming going on in this weather, and with the exception of Lord Chevasse and Loreth (who have just failed dismally to solve the latest set of problems in Dave Tant's *Brigadoon*, and spent a fortune doing so), my characters are in their stables, champing at their bits — ready for the next onset of nastiness to conquer.

And so, it occurs to me to look at the issue of 'What Do Adventurers Do In The Summertime?" — more accurately, what are the views of various hobbyists about the treatment of characters when they are not adventuring.

There are, as usual, two extreme points of view, which enclose a lot of ground between them, and these extreme points of view relate, inevitably, to realism or practicality.

Thus, the realist might argue that a player should *always* be running his or her characters, whether they are adventuring or not. After all, it is argued, characters have to live (and spend money to do so). They have to keep in training (ditto). They must have some place to live in (so they must pay the rates and repair bills and keep the cat fed). They presumably have some form of relaxation.... and so on.

Taken to ridiculous limits, this is unworkable, unless you're serving a 20-year sentence in solitary confinement in one of Her Majesty's less popular establishments. It's rather like the argument that a dungeon must be internally consistent (don't put the orcs next door to the kobolds, otherwise the former will have eaten the latter long before the adventurers turn up); this fails for the same reason — the average DM simply hasn't the time to run the dungeon and its complex internal affairs 24 hours a day.

At the other extreme, once a character has finished an adventure, the player simply tots up the treasure and experience points, does the necessary book-keeping (eg, to account for a gain in experience level), then effectively puts the characters into suspended animation in the cupboard until next time.

This second approach may be quite a popular one, but in my view it fails to answer the question properly because it is *too* simple. It's asking too much of my imagination to permit a character to go into suspension — not eating, spending money, ageing — when there could be legitimate calls on that character's time, money or expertise *between* actual adventures, particularly if events occur which are in some way related to a previous adventure.

I will illustrate this by telling you the tale of poor Proquil, my late-lamented, 8th level illusionist. Some time ago — just before GamesFair '83, as it happens (I recall some of the attendees having a good chortle) — he went on one of Dave Tant's adventures and, in a moment of carelessness, let off a **wand of fear** at a group of enemies. Well, that was the intent, but he managed to catch a few friends at the same time; they ran away, terror-stricken (towards the enemy, of course), and suffered untold problems as a result. Well, Proquil is CN, and something like this doesn't really bother him unduly. As he would have said, "Tough.... but I'm still around."

At the time, we were playing the 'suspended animation between adventures' approach, and after the adventure I (or, rather, Proquil) thought no more of the incident.... then the retribution struck. Proquil was attacked at his own front door by an invisible assailant and knocked unconscious. When he came to, he found he was tied to his own bed — and his hands had been cut off.

It may occur to you than an illusionist isn't much good, *per se*, without hands. Even putting out the milk bottles (as he was doing at the time of the attack) takes on a whole new meaning as a result.

As far as I was concerned, the surprise was that we had departed from the normal approach for the first time, yet Dave — the DM — had every right to respond to actions from the other PCs. Obviously, someone had been a trifle miffed about Proquil's actions, and had decided to teach him a lesson, either directly or (I strongly suspect) through a third party.... maybe an assassin who was given a rather tamer brief than usual. Whether you regard chopping off hands as fair retribution is not the point (although it gave me a lot of scope for argument, of course).

The sequel — what happened to poor Proquil, and can he now play the piano (he couldn't before) — is not particularly relevant here, except that it also took place out of 'game time'. Suffice it to say that subsequent events took a number of weeks to resolve, during which time there was a lot of correspondence and phone calls between me and the DM (and also, I suppose, between the DM and the player responsible, whoever that may have been).

Even though it was my character being clobbered, and the fact that it was the first event of its kind, I regarded all this as quite legitimate. In the final analysis, it is wrong to suppose that the consequences of an adventure can only be dealt with in another adventure. One of Dave Tant's own characters — Thelonius the Monk — apparently committed some solecism, and I understand a number of other players' characters are, between adventures, looking for Thelonius with energy, determination and a certain amount of lead piping. Were I to have one of those characters, I suspect I would be pursuing the matter as 'vimfully' as the rest. Minnie Bannister — one of my own characters — certainly has it in for Naal Vanos, who is run by Chris Rick (even though Min's a bit timid, and would probably advocate compromise in the end).

And compromise is the line I would advocate to others who wonder whether the realistic or the playable aproach is the one to adopt. I think characters should age and spend money between adventures; my own characters age on the basis of doing two adventures per game-time year — three in exceptional circumstances — and I knock off living expenses for the intervening time. I don't keep track of their day-to-day activities; if I wanted to do this I should play **En Garde**, not the **AD&D**™ game.

My own 'house rules' on the subject go on to say that characters cannot — under any circumstances — obtain magical items or gold between adventures unless as a consequence of activities under the control of a DM. Lord Chevasse pretends he is of noble rank and gets a huge allowance from his father, but the actuality of it is that he isn't, and he doesn't, and he has to splash out a fortune in order to lend credence to this ridiculous pretence (this is the role I have chosen for Chevasse, and I'm stuck with it). Characters cannot, between adventures, obtain benefits like extra experience points, reductions in age, increase in characteristic scores, and so on....

I am aware that I might be opening some floodgates by saying "unless DM'd". There are groups, rotating the job of DM, whose sole objective is to generate characters of such high level that nothing and no-one in the known universe would dare challenge them, and with so many possessions that they have to employ a caravan of wagons to cart around their magical gear. This sort of group will happily DM inter-adventure adventures, giving all sorts of benefits to the characters, and rotating the job of DM as soon as the existing incumbent thinks it's about time his/her characters had a bash. Well, that sort of player is playing a different game to the one I'm interested in; good luck, I hope you enjoy your world-mastery, although mastering an empty world doesn't sound like too much fun to me.

In conclusion, I'm aware that what I'm saying here is just as much a compromise as I have recommended before in other contexts. But I can say that it gives me enjoyment, and may do so for others who, although they may regard the game in a different light, share my vague views about its fundamentals. In the end, it amounts to balancing the realism against the playability; make it hard work — though not impossible — to achieve success; allow reasonable inter-game activities, but don't let them control the game. And most of all, don't run a give-away game if you're a DM, and as a player, don't demand or even expect one.

I would be interested in your views on action between adventures, as on other topics. I don't guarantee to agree with them (as if that makes any difference) but I will read and respond.

Don Turnbull

AUCHTER'S AXE
Ian Williamson
AUCHTER HAS ARRIVED IN LITTLE DOLLOP...
HEY YOO! TEENY MEN! WHERE'S THE WIZ'D WI' BEG EERS?
ADVENTURER EMPLOYMENT AGEN
WIZARD WITH BIG EARS?
PERHAPS HE MEANS MITZI?
NA, MITZI HAS BIG EARRINGS..
SO... WE COULD PRETEND WE DIDN'T HEAR HIM PROPERLY!
FROM WHENCE COME YOU GOOD TRAVELLER?
FROM A WIZ'D WI' SILLY EARS, AND SOME STOOPID PEOPLE LOOKIN' FOR A...
...DRAGEN THA' WAS A WIZ'D ANYWAY. AND WHEN I WENT FOR THE OTHER DRAGEN..
... IT WAS NAE THEER!
HEY DRAGEN
.. THEN THE TOOER WENT AWAY! SO I BET IT WAS THAT WIZ'D WHO DID NAE LIKE ME ANYWAY.
I DID NAE LIKE HIM - THEN A TEENY MAN TOLD ME THEER WUS A WIZ'D HEER IN DORLUP!
HE IS A COMPLETE LOONY
WE MAY JUST BE ABLE TO HELP YOU!
THERE IS A WIZARD WHO LIVES ON OUR HILL. ER, I THINK HE DOES HAVE BIG EARS TOO...
IS THEER A DRAGEN?
TWO - I THINK
YEAH.. THA'S ROIGHT!
HELLO THERE. IS THIS THE RIGHT SWAMP FOR AN ADUENTURE?
GET LORST ELFIE!!
TWO YA' SAY?
MY FINE LITTLE NIBELUNG, MY NAME IS WHITE FLIGHT THE GAY BLADE... I TOO SEEK A WIZARD.
NIBELUNG?
ALL ELVES A' SISSIES!
BUT I KNOW SOMETHING YOU DO NOT!
WOT?!
TACT!

WHAT D'YAE WANT?
A COMPANION... BESIDES I HAVE INFORMATION EVEN THESE SCHEMING HALFLINGS DO NOT!
LIKE WHAT?!
I AM IN DEADLY EARNEST. THAT WIZARD IS AN UNWITTING FOOL! THE POWER BENEATH THAT HILL IS A PRIMEVAL ONE – FAR GREATER THAN ANY MAN COULD FEAR.
A' YOO TRYIN' TA GIVE ME THE WILLIES?
YES
LISTEN PANSY BOOTS – I FIGHT DRAGENS!
SO DID I – AS A CHILD.
RUBBISH – YOO LIAR!
IT'S TRUE – I DID
DIDNAE!
DID...
DIDNAE!!
OH, I'M NOT GOING TO GET INVOLVED WITH THIS.
HAHA! GOT YAE!
LOOK THE...
SCHOOZ ME (SNIFF!) I CAN 'ELP...
NEED A FEEF DO YA? THEN DONT LOOK NO FURTHER THAN ICKY SNAILJUICE –
HOO'S HE?
THIA'S ME SUH! 'AS ME NAME
ACH! GO AWAY
WHAT?
UM A BIT DEAF...
HE COULD BE USEFUL. WHAT LEVEL ARE YOU?
15TH
MORE LIKE 15 INCHES..
I THINK THEY'RE GOING TO DO IT
DO WHAT 'EER YAE WANT ELFIE... I'M AFTER THE WIZ'D!
OKAY WIZ'D – IT'S ME...
♫ NACH NIBELHEIM FAHREN WIR NIEDER ♫
HAVE I GOT TIME TA' MAKE UP A PACKED LUNCH?
CAN I COME THEN?
CERTAINLY IF YOU'RE 15TH LEVEL...
IF YOU'RE NOT...
...THEN YOU WONT STAND AN 'ORC IN HELL'S CHANCE" – BECAUSE THAT IS WHERE I FEAR WE ARE GOING.
ER... WHAT IF YOU'RE REALLY ONLY 1ST LEVEL?
HA HA! YES, A FINE JOKE MY FRIEND!
NEXT THE HALLS OF DURRINGLADE

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